

# THE SUNDAY TIMES

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# Bilateral talks with S'pore to proceed, says Malaysia

Both sides will discuss airspace issues in 'coming weeks', and maritime issues on Jan 28

**Shannon Teoh**  
Malaysia Bureau Chief  
In Kuala Lumpur

Singapore and Malaysia will proceed with scheduled meetings to "discuss the way forward" on both airspace and maritime issues, Malaysia's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement yesterday.

Malaysia said their foreign ministers met at an Asean retreat in Chiang Mai on Thursday and Friday, as part of its "continuing efforts... to pursue diplomatic solutions to bilateral issues with its closest neighbour Singapore, in a peaceful and constructive manner, on the basis of equality and mutual respect".

Although the Malaysian Foreign Ministry did not give an exact date, its statement said both countries' transport ministers will meet "in the coming weeks" to discuss airspace-related issues, including the Instrument Landing System and approach procedures for Seletar Airport. On Jan 28, top Foreign Ministry officials will also discuss and find solutions to Malaysia-Singapore maritime issues "as well as the legal and operational matters in order to de-escalate the situation on the ground, and provide a basis for further discussions and negotiations".

"Despite recent incidents that

seemed to undermine ongoing diplomatic efforts, Dato Saifuddin Abdullah received a letter with positive undertones from Dr Vivian Balakrishnan," the Malaysian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. It was referring to Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sapien's provocative visit on Jan 9 to waters off Tuas, which resulted in the postponement of an annual bilateral ministerial meeting.

This statement from Kuala Lumpur follows up on the two foreign ministers' agreement on Jan 8 – the day before Datuk Osman's action – to establish a working group on both disputes.

On Thursday, Datuk Osman claimed he had the "unofficial blessing" of Foreign Minister Saifuddin to board a Malaysian Marine Department vessel anchored off Tuas, in what Malaysia main-

tains is its territory under Johor Baru port. Singapore has consistently treated the area as part of its territorial waters.

But the Foreign Ministry on Friday denied approving his trip, saying that "upon learning of the planned visit from a Malaysian enforcement agency on the morning of 9 January itself", it "immediately and repeatedly contacted the chief minister's office and conveyed a message not to proceed with the visit".

Mr Osman's action resulted in the postponement of the Jan 14 meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee for Iskandar Malaysia, as Singapore said the intrusion made the bilateral talks "untenable". The chief minister also sits on the panel.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on Friday also

confirmed that "the Menteri Besar went without our permission", adding that "he thought it was Johor waters, that's why he went there".

Dr Mahathir described Singapore's reaction as quite severe, "as if you are going to war".

"I mean he is going to go in a ship into neutral water," he said.

"It is not Singapore water either, it is international water and the Menteri Besar can go into international water without Singapore sending warships to chase him away," he said in reply to a question during a dialogue at the prestigious Oxford Union in Britain.

Malaysia had, on Oct 25, unilaterally extended the Johor Baru port limits "into what are indisputably Singapore territorial waters", Dr Balakrishnan told Parliament last Monday.

The extension, he said, goes beyond even the territorial sea claims in Malaysia's 1979 map, which Singapore has rejected consistently.

He also highlighted how Singapore has long exercised sovereignty and patrolled the disputed waters without any protest from Malaysia.

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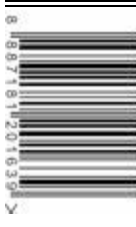
## 2nd Trump-Kim summit to be held in late Feb

US President Donald Trump, who will meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for the second time in late February, said yesterday that he had an "incredible" meeting with North Korea's top nuclear negotiator Kim Yong Chol.

The two sides had made "a lot of progress", Mr Trump told reporters. "We've picked a country but we'll be announcing it in the future," he said.

Vietnam has been widely touted as the most likely site of the next summit. Other possible venues include Thailand, Hawaii, or a return to Singapore.

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# Sugar tax to change behaviour, not boost revenues

Mix of measures, education to cut high sugar intake, says Edwin Tong

Yuen Sin

The objective of a proposed tax on high-sugar pre-packaged drinks is not to boost government coffers but to ensure that it changes the actions of consumers and manufacturers of such products, Senior Minister of State for Health Edwin Tong said yesterday.

His comments come as Singapore grapples with the issue of how to cut high sugar intake among people here – a major contributor to obesity and diabetes.

“We want this fiscal measure to influence and shape behaviour... If we impose taxes and we end up collecting more taxes, then I think something is not right. Because it means people are prepared to pay the tax to consume the same level of sugar,” Mr Tong told 50 participants at a dialogue at Maxwell Chambers.

Organised by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Health Promotion Board (HPB), the dialogue was the last of more than 10 sessions held since the launch of a public consultation by MOH last month. The window for feedback ends this Friday.

The MOH will study the comments gathered from more than



Mr Daniel Teo (in blazer), deputy chief executive of Pokka International, speaking at a MOH-HPB dialogue on proposed measures on high-sugar drinks yesterday. He said measures that apply only to pre-packaged drinks would have limited impact as they “will simply shift consumer demand to unregulated products like bubble tea and coffee”. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

3,000 members of the public through online and offline channels before coming up with a decision. It did not specify a timeframe for this.

The MOH has proposed four measures: banning the sale of higher sugar pre-packaged drinks; imposing a tax on manufacturers and importers of such drinks; a mandatory front-of-pack nutrition label on these drinks; and placing wider restrictions or banning the advertisements of high-sugar drinks.

Mr Tong noted a combination of measures and not a single silver bullet is needed to address the problem of high sugar consumption, adding that “underlying all of that has to be a very strong educational effort”.

The two-hour dialogue, which included health and advertising professionals, members of academia and the public, saw mixed views.

Some felt that a total ban would be too draconian, while others, like business development manager Mohamad Saddiq, 30, were in favour of

it. He recalled how he often drank Teh Botal Sosro (bottled jasmine tea) but when the supermarket near his home stopped selling it, so did his craving for sugary drinks.

“So speaking from personal experience, a ban could work.”

Ms Stephanie Lim, 28, founder of an interest group that aims to improve health outcomes for lower-income groups, suggested that nutrition labels should be easy to understand for the public. For example, instead of indicating how many grams of sugar a drink contains, a label that says how many teaspoons of sugar a drink contains would be more effective.

She also hopes that the proposed taxes on manufacturers and importers – designed to encourage the industry to lower the sugar content of its drinks – would not simply end up getting passed on to consumers, in turn driving up prices.

Representatives from the industry such as Mr Daniel Teo, deputy

chief executive of Pokka International, suggested the proposed measures, which currently apply only to pre-packaged drinks, would have limited impact. He said: “It is dangerous to take a narrow approach as this will simply shift consumer demand to unregulated products like bubble tea and coffee.”

In response, Mr Tong stressed these efforts – pre-packaged drinks account for more than half of Singaporeans’ sugar intake from sugar-sweetened drinks – are merely a starting point. He said: “We want to make sure that this set of measures is not just effective but also maybe more importantly, sustainable... We don’t want something that drives behaviour from one type of sugar to another type of sugar.”

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• The public can give feedback on these proposed measures till Jan 25 at [www.reach.gov.sg/sugarydrinks](http://www.reach.gov.sg/sugarydrinks)

**Ban them?  
Tax them?  
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Sugary drinks are the biggest reason for Singaporeans’ rising sugar intake. Insight looks at the issue and what other countries are doing

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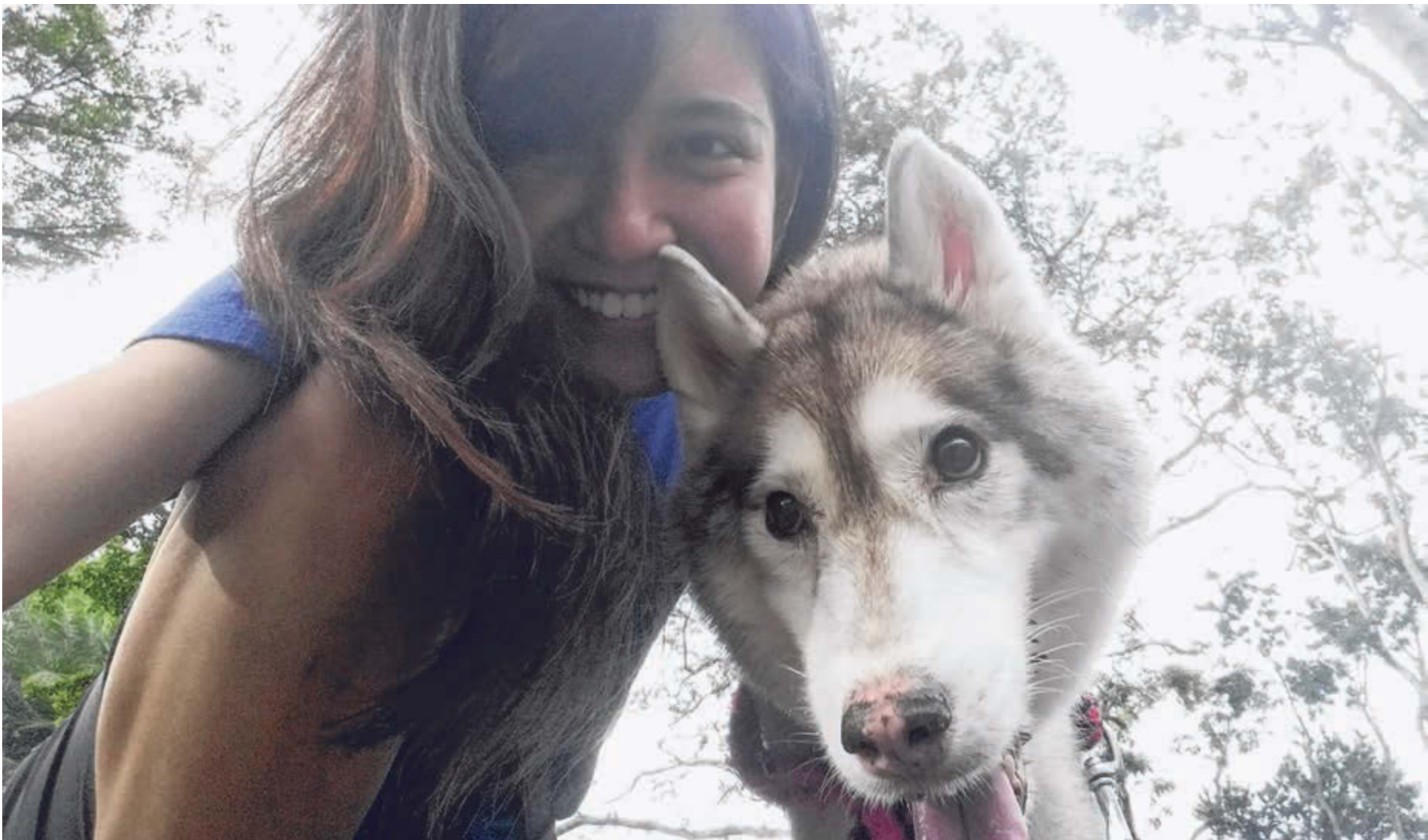
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Video producer Denise De Cruz, 25, spent almost \$30,000 to treat her Siberian husky Cody who was diagnosed with cancer. The treatment included three blood transfusions. Cody died last November and Miss De Cruz did not regret footing the hefty medical bill. However, the SPCA said one out of three pet owners who plans to give up, or has given up, his pet does so for reasons linked to cost, usually medical-related. PHOTO: COURTESY OF DENISE DE CRUZ



HIGH OVERHEADS

In Singapore, we have a lot of small veterinary clinics, not big hospitals. Small clinics would not have economies of scale to bring prices down.



SPCA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JAIPAL SINGH GILL, explaining one of the reasons for the high cost of vet fees in Singapore.

"We don't have that many vets in Singapore and the costs are generally high."

Even as pet ownership numbers and veterinary centres have grown over the years, vets' fees have not come down and in fact have increased, noted Dr Gill. Last year, there were about 68,000 dogs registered with the AVA and 87 licensed veterinary centres.

"Staff salaries are going up, medical supplies and equipment are expensive. Rent, which comprises a huge portion of operating cost, has also gone up... In Singapore, we have a lot of small veterinary clinics, not big hospitals. Small clinics would not have economies of scale to bring prices down," said Dr Gill.

At the same time, a vet is not a general practitioner. A vet has to play the role of a cardiologist, neurologist and surgeon.

One option to bring down veterinary costs for animal owners is pet insurance, he said.

Even though pet insurance has been around for over a decade, it is not widely taken up in Singapore as compared with overseas.

In a 2015 survey of 1,047 owners of dogs and cats done by SPCA, only 0.9 per cent of cat owners and 2.6 per cent of dog owners had pet insurance.

Still, it could be slowly gaining in popularity. A spokesman for MSIG Insurance (Singapore) said 80 per cent of its Happy Tails pet insurance policies were purchased online and the number of policies sold has seen a 18 per cent increase since 2015.

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# High vet fees a bane for pet owners

Medical cost a likely factor behind AVA figures that show more owners dumping their pets

Joyce Lim  
Senior Correspondent

When Cody was diagnosed with cancer, her owner spent almost \$30,000 on her treatment including three blood transfusions.

The Siberian husky eventually died last November, but video producer Denise De Cruz, 25, never regretted footing the hefty medical bill. "Having Cody made me understand the responsibilities pet own-

ers should be prepared to take on," she said.

Cody was four years old and suffering from stomach problems when Miss De Cruz adopted her in 2010. The dog's previous owner had abandoned her.

It is a predicament that many other pets here are in.

The latest statistics from the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) show that there were 141 pets abandoned here last year. This is up from 92 in 2017

and 58 in 2016. While AVA does not have a breakdown of the reasons why they were cast aside, cost is often one factor.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) said one out of three pet owners who plans to give up, or has given up, his pet does so for reasons linked to cost. And these are usually medical-related, according to SPCA's executive director Jaipal Singh Gill.

Dr Gill says pet owners believe vets' fees are too high, not just in Singapore but also overseas.

Vets say one of the main complaints they face is that pet owners say they pay more for their animals' medical treatment than they

do for their own.

Miss Chelsea Lim, 27, spent almost \$1,000 when she checked her cat into a pet hospital for one night last month. "It's more expensive than a hospital bed for a human being," said the marketing professional, who paid for the treatment as she did not want to see her pet in pain after being diagnosed with chronic kidney disease.

Those interviewed say that vets' fees are often high because they are not subsidised by the Government. Moreover, they are not regulated and it is an open market.



The AVA said vets in Singapore are required to comply with the Code of Ethics for Veterinarians,

which sets out appropriate standards for professional conduct, including the discussion of professional fees and associated charges with pet owners.

But even when vets are upfront about their fees, there are still some owners who feel they are being ripped off by some vets.


The Consumers Association of Singapore handled four cases of disagreements over vets' fees in 2017 and three in 2016. It did not receive any complaints about this last year.

Mr Richard Tan, 37, a chef, said: "We often do not have a choice but to accept what the vet says. My dog can't tell me where the pain is; only the vet can tell me.






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# Mueller disputes report that Trump ordered lawyer to lie

WASHINGTON • The special counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election disputed a report that said President Donald Trump had directed Michael Cohen, his long-time lawyer and fixer, to lie to Congress about his role in negotiations to build a skyscraper in Moscow.

The rare public statement by a spokesman for special counsel Robert Mueller challenged the facts of an article published by BuzzFeed News on Thursday, saying Cohen had told prosecutors about being pressured by the President before his congressional testimony.

"BuzzFeed's description of specific statements to the special counsel's office, and characterisation of documents and testimony obtained by this office, regarding Michael Cohen's congressional testimony are not accurate," said the spokesman, Mr Peter Carr, on Friday.

The BuzzFeed report led to a flurry of reactions by senior mem-

bers of Congress before Mr Carr's statement, who said the allegations, if true, could be grounds for initiating impeachment proceedings against Mr Trump.

The President himself responded on Twitter late on Friday, calling the special counsel's statement "a very sad day for journalism, but a great day for our country!"

A proven effort by Mr Trump to pressure a witness to commit perjury would be one of the most damning revelations so far in the investigation into Russia's attempts to sabotage the 2016 presidential election and could be the cornerstone of a case that the President obstructed justice to keep investigators at bay.

Both the White House and lawyers for Mr Trump vigorously denied the BuzzFeed report even before the special counsel's office weighed in.

"Two words sum it up better than anything anybody else can say, and that is 'categorically false'," White

House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters.

BuzzFeed News maintained that its report was accurate, its editor, Mr Ben Smith, said after Mr Mueller's office disputed the account.

The New York Times has not independently confirmed the BuzzFeed report.

One person familiar with Cohen's testimony to the special counsel's prosecutors said Cohen did not state that the President had pressured him to lie to Congress.

Democratic Representative Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said his panel would investigate the BuzzFeed report and was "already working to secure additional witness testimony and documents related to the Trump Tower Moscow deal and other investigative matters". NYTIMES

SEE WORLD A21



Michael Cohen (above), Mr Donald Trump's long-time lawyer and fixer, did not state that the President had pressured him to lie to Congress, said a person familiar with Cohen's testimony to the special counsel's prosecutors. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG



# US, North Korea have made a lot of progress: Trump

Venue for second summit picked and will be revealed later, he says after meeting Kim's aide

MUCH PROGRESS

**Kim Jong Un is looking very forward to it and so am I. We've made a lot of progress that has not been reported by the media.**



US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP, on the upcoming summit with the North Korean leader.

WASHINGTON • United States President Donald Trump said he had an "incredible" meeting with North Korea's nuclear envoy Kim Yong Chol and the two sides had made "a lot of progress".

The White House announced after Friday's talks that Mr Trump would hold a second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in late February, but will maintain economic sanctions on Pyongyang.

"That was an incredible meeting," Mr Trump told reporters yesterday of the talks. "We've agreed to meet some time, probably the end of February. We've picked a country but we'll be announcing it in the future."

"Kim Jong Un is looking very forward to it and so am I. We've made a lot of progress that has not been reported by the media," he said.

Despite his upbeat comments, there has been no indication of any narrowing of differences over US demands that North Korea abandon a nuclear weapons programme that threatens the US, and Pyongyang's demands for a lifting of sanctions.

The first summit held on June 12 last year in Singapore produced a vague commitment by Mr Kim Jong Un to work towards the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but he has yet to take what Washington sees as concrete steps in that direction.

Mr Trump did not elaborate on the country chosen to host the summit, but Vietnam has been considered a leading candidate.

South Korea's presidential office said it expected the upcoming summit to be a "turning point to lay the firm foundation for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula".

Analyst Harry Kazianis from the Washington-based Centre for the National Interest said: "Both na-

tions must now show at least some tangible benefits from their diplomatic efforts during a second summit, or risk their efforts being panned as nothing more than reality TV."

Mr Trump had declared just after the Singapore meeting that the nuclear threat posed by North Korea was over. But hours before Mr Kim Yong Chol's arrival on Thursday, the US President unveiled a revamped missile defence strategy that singled out North Korea as an ongoing and "extraordinary threat".

Mr Kim Yong Chol, regarded as a member of Mr Kim Jong Un's inner circle, also held talks with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and US special representative on North Korea Stephen Biegun.

A State Department statement said Mr Biegun would travel to Sweden at the weekend to attend an international conference, which is also being attended by North Korean Vice-Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui.

"The North Koreans need a real indication of what the US is willing to put on the table," said Ms Jenny Town, a North Korea expert at 38 North, a Washington-based think tank.

Mr Victor Cha, a former White House adviser on Asia, said Mr Trump may be so desperate for a policy "win" that he could be vulnerable to a bad deal with North Korea.

"I worry that the timing works to North Korea's benefit," Mr Cha said, citing pressures on Mr Trump such as the partial US government shutdown and the ongoing probe into alleged Russian ties to his 2016 presidential campaign. REUTERS

US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at their first summit in Singapore on June 12 last year. They are set to meet again late next month. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

## News analysis

# Trump-Kim II: Bar set high, but expectations must be realistic



Nirmal Ghosh

US Bureau Chief  
In Washington

Official-level US-North Korea talks remain essentially a non-starter, so all eyes are now on the upcoming second summit between President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un to take the dialogue, which they kicked off in Singapore last June, to the next level.

Mr Trump has shown that he can break away from policy orthodoxy. While Washington's stated objective is denuclearisation of North Korea, many Pyongyang watchers believe he could sign a peace agreement (the Korean War has not officially ended) and start withdrawing US troops based in South Korea.

In return, Mr Kim would have to make some visible concession related to his nuclear programme; intentions alone will not suffice if the process is to sustain momentum. Yet North Korea is unlikely to give up the nuclear card that has arguably enabled Mr Kim to feel secure enough to step out onto the global stage to talk with leaders like Mr Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

For the foreseeable future, North Korea will remain a de facto nuclear power that, importantly, as long as it does not threaten the United States, will not incur the wrath of the mercurial American President.

Yet, Pyongyang does want sanctions lifted. Sceptics – and there are no shortage of them, with good reason, when it comes to US-North Korea relations – suspect the US may be lured into giving more than it gets to have a win from the summit.

"So far, there is no indication that a second US-North Korea summit will yield much more than the first one did: cosmetic gains, reduced tensions, strengthened personal ties between leaders," says Mr Mintaro Oba, a former State Department official who has worked on North Korea.

"These are useful outcomes, but they may be seen as failures given the very high expectations Washington has been setting for this diplomatic process. Both the United States and North Korea will have to demonstrate greater creativity and flexibility if they hope this summit will lead to more substantive progress on denuclearisation."

The summit is important for President Trump even as there is increasing preoccupation with domestic issues in the US. The 2020 presidential campaign looms. Mr Trump may care less than usual about what eventually happens on the Korean peninsula as long as North Korea does not threaten the US and its allies – which, if direct threats and missile and nuclear tests are indicators, it has not since the Singapore summit.

The best-case scenario would be the US presenting some "symbolic form of very minor economic relief to show goodwill and, in return, obtain a vague, broad, preliminary timetable or schedule-based initial phase of denuclearisation," said East Asia expert Lim Tai Wei of the Singapore University of Social Sciences. "Then all parties have something to take home," he added.

"I hope the US is privately telling North Korea that it better take concrete steps; and the US has to set extremely specific measures that the North Koreans can meet," says Georgetown University's Dr Balbina Hwang.

Meanwhile, the two Korean leaders are pursuing their own process, somewhat regardless of the US. "They have an agenda, a vision, for what they want to create on the Korean peninsula," said Dr Hwang. "And they are going to do what they are going to do."

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• Additional reporting by Chang May Choon in Seoul

## Possible venues for the second summit

### 1. Vietnam

Vietnam appears to be the leading candidate to host the meeting. A Vietnamese government source told Agence France-Presse that "logistical preparations" were under way to host the summit, most likely in the capital Hanoi or the coastal city of Danang. North Korea maintains diplomatic relations with Vietnam.

### 2. Thailand

Thailand is considered to be one of the two top contenders for the next summit location. Thailand, which also has diplomatic ties with North Korea, has hosted major multilateral meetings in Bangkok and Hua Hin. Phuket and Pattaya also have the requisite infrastructure.

### 3. Hawaii

Besides Hanoi and Bangkok, the White House scouting team has also checked out Hawaii, sources told CNN recently. But as North Korea does not have an embassy in Hawaii, it will be difficult for Pyongyang to send in teams that could be based there ahead of the summit for planning purposes.

### 4. Singapore

It hosted the first summit on June 12 last year. The landmark meeting ended with a commitment from the North Korean leader to work towards "denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula", but negotiations appear to have stalled since then.





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# CPTPP members signal intent to expand agreement

Signatories highlight importance of open, inclusive and rules-based trading system

**Seow Bei Yi**  
Business Correspondent

Members of a landmark 11-nation Pacific Rim trade deal have signalled their openness to expand the agreement by taking in new members to form a stronger united front against the rise of protectionism.

Following a meeting in Tokyo yesterday – the first since the pact came into force on Dec 30 – participating countries in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for

Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) highlighted in a joint statement the importance of maintaining and strengthening the principles of an open, inclusive and rules-based trading system. This comes amid growing concerns over recent trends towards protectionism, they added, reiterating that the pact is open to all economies which accept these principles and are willing to meet its standards.

They also “confirmed their strong determination to expand the agreement through the acces-

sion of those new economies”.

Signed on March 8 last year, the CPTPP is a revived version of the Trans-Pacific Partnership after the United States’ withdrawal. It brings together economies from both sides of the Pacific, representing 500 million people and US\$10 trillion (S\$13.5 trillion) in gross domestic product, or about 14 per cent of the global economy.

Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam have ratified the deal. The other countries involved are Brunei, Chile, Malaysia and Peru.

Trade experts and Asian diplomats suggested earlier this month that the US and China are highly unlikely to join the CPTPP.

China, which is involved in a tariff war with the US, is pursuing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, though negotiations for the mega trade agreement between Asean’s 10 member states and India, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan have stalled.

New Zealand’s Minister for Trade and Export Growth David Parker said before leaving for Tokyo that the CPTPP coming into force “is a significant milestone” that is already giving exporters better access, including to Japan, Canada and Mexico where it previously had no free trade agreements.

Apart from reduced tariffs upon coming into force, the pact also gives Singapore businesses preferen-

tial access to the services sectors of CPTPP markets. Other benefits include bidding for government projects which were previously closed to foreign bidders.

Yesterday, ministers welcomed the seven signatories’ early ratification and implementation, expressing hope that all 11 members will formally endorse the accord early.

The joint statement, however, recognised that Malaysia is still evaluating the agreement and its decision concerning ratification. Malaysia’s Minister of International Trade and Industry Darell Leiking last Thursday said Putrajaya will not rush into ratifying the CPTPP. With the pact being signed before the Pakatan Harapan govern-

ment came into power last May, he told South China Morning Post that the authorities want to ensure its terms are fair to the country.

CPTPP members also expressed their firm commitment yesterday to fully implement the agreement, to send a “strong signal in support of free trade” and put in place rules suitable for the 21st century.

In a speech at the meeting, Singapore Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing urged members to grow the CPTPP, and said: “The entry of new parties... is crucial.”

“Expansion would accelerate and deepen regional economic integration; as well as anchor the CPTPP as one of the pathways towards the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific,” he added.

On the sidelines, he noted the agreement has to be implemented “smoothly and expeditiously”, assuring interested parties they can come on board without difficulty.

Another factor to consider is how it takes shape, such as whether it is “progressive”, meaning it keeps pace with the times and is likelier to attract more countries.

Thailand was among the countries mentioned, noted Mr Chan. Other potential entrants mentioned in past reports include South Korea, Indonesia and Britain.

On how Singapore can benefit, Mr Chan said the deal means the Republic’s economy can be integrated with a “much bigger market”. Businesses will be able to source products from more places at more competitive prices, on top of having a larger market to sell to. Other benefits include a diversification of risk, so the country is not beholden to how any particular market performs.

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LOOKING AT TRENDS

**We do look at the trends and if there is a spike in staff leaving, we worry. We ask ourselves if we could have done better in developing the academics who leave. We see it as our loss too, because we have recruited the academic and he or she had spent a good six to seven years with us.**



NUS PROVOST HO TECK HUA (above)

The National University of Singapore says its tenure system has been set up to be robust, and it comes under scrutiny periodically.  
ST PHOTO: LEE JIA WEN

## NUS’ promotion and tenure policies ‘robust and competitive’

**Sandra Davie**  
Senior Education Correspondent

The National University of Singapore (NUS) has defended its promotion and tenure policies, describing them as “robust”, in response to a debate on tenure and the need to build a Singaporean academic core.

While explaining that the attrition rate for faculty on its tenure track has remained at about an annual 4.1 per cent over the last three years, NUS Provost Ho Teck Hua said that in 2017, about six in 10 assistant professors who applied for tenure were successful, stressing that the rate is higher than many top universities around the world.

He also noted that the success rate is heavily dependent on the quality of tenure applicants.

A recent Today newspaper article, which has since been taken down, quoted several academics, who had left NUS and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), as

criticising the way staff are promoted or given tenures, and questioned what they claimed was a fixation with university rankings.

While the tenure system, introduced in the local universities in the early 2000s, periodically comes under scrutiny, the latest discussion comes after NUS revamped its academic talent recruitment scheme, offering “internationally competitive” salaries and million-dollar research grants to young academic stars, including foreigners.

NTU has a similar scheme – the Nanyang Assistant Professorship – that has been in place for several years, which offers start-up research grants of up to \$1 million.

In an article in The Sunday Times last month, some academics expressed concern over these “aggressive” recruitment schemes, while assistant professors who had been at the universities for years were being turned down for tenures despite exceeding research and publication standards, and being recommended by their departments and external reviewers.

They also described the recruitment schemes as an “escalating arms race”, with the two universities pursuing talent who could help them reach even greater heights in university league tables.

Provost Ho, who taught at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School and Berkeley University’s Haas School before moving to NUS in 2015 to head its research efforts, told The Sunday Times last week that the university’s tenure system has been set up to be robust since it

means a commitment to employing the professor till age 65.

Every promotion or tenure decision goes through three committees – first at the department level, then at faculty level and finally the university level. Their reports then go to the provost and finally the president. There are between 25 and 30 people involved in each decision and it is not down to a single individual, he said.

If he or the president (Professor Tan Eng Chye) differs from the committees’ view, then the matter goes before the board of trustees. “There are checks and balances all the way. If the committee says ‘no’ and I say ‘yes’ and the president says ‘yes’, then we have to appear before the board to defend our decisions.”

He also stressed that both teaching and research are important considerations for recruitment and retention. “We expect our faculty to reach the bar we set for both and excel in one of them,” he said.

NTU did not give figures, but said it values teaching and research and both are equally important criteria in its promotion and tenure process. It also said its heads and academic leaders regularly review and discuss promotion and tenure matters, and relate these to staff.

On the issue of local universities lacking a Singaporean academic core, Professor Ho pointed to last week’s Parliament sitting, when Education Minister Ong Ye Kung said that 50 per cent of the faculty at the six publicly-funded universities comprises local academics.

While the “inflow” into NUS

varies from department to department, Prof Ho said the university’s faculty recruitment schemes offering up to \$1 million in research grants also apply to Singaporeans.

“At the end of the day, the pool here is small – there is a small number of Singaporeans who want to be academics. And those doing research in fields like computing may prefer to go and work for the Googles of the world.”

He also announced new schemes to woo Singaporean scholars from abroad, including one to supplement the scholarships of Singaporeans doing their PhDs and post-doctoral studies overseas. They will also be offered mentorship by NUS academics.

NUS and NTU are also holding a conference in August to bring back 200 Singaporean scholars doing research in universities and industry overseas. The hope is that they will reconnect with the academic community in Singapore and learn about the opportunities here.

Provost Ho also said that every member of staff was valued and while faculty leave for various reasons, including family-related ones such as their children’s education, if there was a sudden spike in faculty members leaving, “we worry”.

“We ask ourselves if we could have done better in developing the academics who leave. We see it as our loss too, because we have recruited the academic and he or she had spent a good six to seven years with us.”

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### Academics stand their ground

Five of the academics who were quoted in the recent Today article “Opaque policies, fixation with KPIs, rankings: Why arts and humanities academics quit NUS, NTU” have stood by their comments after the article was taken down.

Professors John DiMoia, Axel Gelfert, Linda Lim, Andrew Quitmeyer and Woo Jun Jie, who are all based overseas now, issued a public statement yesterday saying: “We believe that freedom of expression and active public debate are foundational to scholarly excellence and the advancement of human knowledge.”

The statement added that they are saddened by this “apparent intolerance”.

When asked why the Jan 6 report was taken down on Jan 10, Today, which is published by Mediagroup Press, told The Sunday Times: “The article was taken down as it is the subject of a legal challenge and our lawyers are looking into the matter.”

When asked about the statement, a National University of Singapore (NUS) spokesman said: “NUS upholds the principles of academic freedom and open inquiry, which are central to our culture of academic excellence and continual improvement.”

“We welcome diversity of views, constructive feedback and robust discourse. Therefore the university also wishes that any article about us published in our mainstream media should be impartial and factually accurate, so that the public can come to its own conclusions in a fair and objective manner.”

The spokesman added that the Today article “did not adequately represent NUS’ position on the matter, although our clarification was sought”.

**Sandra Davie**



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# Does boss' son have the right to scold the maid?

Over 27,000 members – maids, employers and agents – of Facebook group discuss such issues

Yuen Sin

A maid recounts how her employer's six-year-old son often hurls invective at her: "Aunty stupid, aunty bad and aunty die." Does she have the right to scold him, she wonders.

An employer whose four-room flat does not have a spare room for her new helper asks where maids prefer sleeping: the study, the store-room or the living room.

Such interpersonal matters loom large in Singapore, where one in five households employs and lives with a foreign domestic worker. Yet, there is no Ministry of Manpower (MOM) handbook or legislation that can authoritatively say what is right or wrong in many of these situations, which fall into grey areas and depend on context.

Over the past two years, however, both maids and employers have been turning to a Facebook group, called FDW in Singapore (Working Conditions Forum), for help.

Its membership has swelled to over 27,000 people since it was set up in October 2017. Among these, maids of various nationalities slightly outnumber employers.

An average of 30 to 35 posts go up daily. Discussions have been picked up by news sites or brought to the attention of MOM.

The group's aim, said its founder Catherine Plagne-Ismael, 45, is to be a platform where conversation between all parties involved in foreign labour issues – maids, employers, agents and even non-profit groups and MOM officials – can take place.

This comes on the back of the rising number of maids coming to Singapore for work, from 214,500 in December 2013 to 246,800 as of December 2017.

But for whatever reason, many do not stay with the same family for long – only about half of the maids placed by agents remain with their employer for at least a year.

To keep the discussion in the group balanced, Mrs Plagne-Ismael works with a team of seven volunteer moderators – three domestic workers, three employers and one employment agent – to enforce its rules.

It plugs a gap in Singapore where groups on domestic helper matters mainly represent the interests of either employers or maids, and discussions often take on a polarised cast.

"I thought that if you want the (maid) to be happy, the employer needs to be happy and vice versa. So both of them need to have a dialogue," said Mrs Plagne-Ismael, a Frenchwoman married to a Singaporean. She started the group when she had to hire a maid to look after her father-in-law.

Rules in the group include writing in English only so that conversations do not descend into echo chambers. Personal attacks, aggressive comments or any naming or shaming of one's employer or helper in the event of a conflict are also disallowed.



(From left) Indonesian maid Idah Rosidah, 34, Ms Sunita Shri Rammani, 40, an employer, Indonesian maid Nurlaela (sitting), 25, employment agent Irfan Ibrahim from Living Well Maid Agency, 36, and Filipino maid Janelyn Dupingay Vergara, 28. Ms Sunita, Mr Irfan and Ms Janelyn are moderators of the FDW in Singapore (Working Conditions Forum) Facebook group, while Ms Rosidah and Ms Nurlaela are active members whom the moderators consider very important to the group.

ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

"We (try to) ensure that the forum never becomes a battleground between workers and employers. It's got to be constructive debate, or sharing knowledge and experience," said Mrs Plagne-Ismael, a special education teacher.

Posts in the group often revolve around the issue of maids' working conditions and what is considered reasonable for employers to provide, from Wi-Fi to salary bonuses, as well as employers' relationships with their maids.

Mrs Plagne-Ismael said that if some posts show that MOM regulations have been clearly violated, such as a worker's salary not being paid on time, or more serious cases where someone has evidence of being abused or deprived of basic needs like food, moderators may encourage the maid to report the incident to MOM. She may also get in touch with non-governmental organisations on behalf of the maid.

Complaints and debates aside, both employers and maids also regularly pen appreciative posts.

Fund manager Henrietta Yap, 37, shared how her maid had bought a toy for her daughter after she gave her tickets to Universal Studios Singapore. Forum moderator Janelyn Dupingay Vergara, 28, a Filipino maid, said she was thankful her employer treated her like family by taking her out to eat at restaurants, and by celebrating her birthday with her.

Some other members have also been inspired by the conversations online. Curriculum manager Siti Munira Muhris, 29, has organised four free yoga sessions for maids to

help them cope with the stress they face on the job.

Indonesian maid Idah Rosidah, 34, who joined the forum around July last year, said that she initially had a more negative view of employers here when she first moved to Singapore in 2017, due to stories that she heard from others.

"But seeing so many positive experiences in the forum made me believe that there are still many of us (maids) who are very lucky to have good employers too."

Ms Yap said that occasionally, maids may disagree with her comments that try to explain an employer's perspective.

"But it has always ended with us agreeing to disagree in a civil and mutually respectful manner. While we can say that we try our best to put ourselves in their shoes, we can honestly never truly comprehend the emotional and physical challenges of having to leave your family behind to go work in a stranger's house," she said.

However, as the group has more maids than employers, the employers' voice may get drowned out by the rest at times, Ms Yap also cautioned.

To that, Mrs Plagne-Ismael said that the group is hoping to get more employers and agents on board.

For now, it is already making waves. "To my knowledge, it is the only platform in Singapore that allows all three parties to join and communicate on an equal ground, and we hope that all members can get more balanced advice this way."

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## OTHER FACEBOOK GROUPS

### FDW Employers @ Singapore

15,000 members

This closed employers-only Facebook group usually discusses problems that employers face with their maids, says member Henrietta Yap, 37. They may also ask for advice on which maids or employment agents to engage. Some may share positive experiences with their maids from time to time.

### Singapore transfer helpers (maids) direct hire

53,000 members

Posts are mainly advertisements by employers looking for maids, or vice versa. Group moderators will occasionally post reminders about Ministry of Manpower regulations and minimum salary requirements.

### More than just a maid – Support and Education for Foreign Domestic Workers

4,000 members

This group for maids in Singapore and other regional countries offers information about workshops and courses that they can attend. Some discuss problems they face on the job, or share tips on how to motivate or improve themselves at work.

## BALANCED DISCUSSION

To my knowledge, it is the only platform in Singapore that allows all three parties to join and communicate on an equal ground, and we hope that all members can get more balanced advice this way.



MRS CATHERINE PLAGNE-ISMAEL, founder of the Facebook group FDW in Singapore (Working Conditions Forum).

# Top three issues on the forum

## SHOULD MAIDS GET SALARY ADVANCES?

In a post that drew 145 comments in a week, Ms Nuru Fizah asked other employers in the forum if they would agree to their maids' request to be given their salary a month or two in advance.

A few said yes, as their maids needed it for emergencies such as paying family members' medical fees.

But others said the employer is

not obligated to do so, and that their own maids have lied about why they needed the money.

Several maids said that while such advances were a lifeline for them when in a pickle, they agreed that the employer should give an advance only if she trusted that the maid's situation was genuine.

Ms Nuru decided to give her maid an advance of two months' salary to help with her father's medical fees, but stressed to her

that this was a one-time favour.

## SHOULD MAIDS GET TO GO HOME WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER DIES?

Some maids shared stories of their employers refusing to allow them to go home when a family member died, with other maids saying this is heartless of employers.

However, an employer said that many maids invented deaths in the family as an excuse to go home, which resulted in employers losing

the fees they had paid for the maids to work in Singapore. This may cause some to view such requests with suspicion, she said.

A maid suggested that employers could ask for a copy of the death certificate to check if the situation is genuine.

## SHOULD EMPLOYERS LET MAIDS USE MOBILE PHONES?

Over 20 posts have been made about this issue. In one, fund man-

ager Henrietta Yap, 37, said that while she allows her maids to have free access to their phones, she has also heard of cases where maids become addicted to their phones, secretly buy or use phones, and then get sent home as they had neglected their duties.

She reminded maids to honour the contract if employers had said that phones are not allowed, as breaking the rules will cause an employer to lose their trust in them.

However, some maids pointed out that they were barred from using phones even though their contract did not mention such a prohibition.

An employer urged the rest to give their maids access to a mobile phone, at least during break times and days off. "If she feels well... and happy, you will benefit as an employer as well," she said.

Yuen Sin



# Singapore student takes on Mahathir at Oxford Union

He presses Malaysian PM on disputes between the 2 countries

A Singapore student at Oxford University took on Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad last Friday, asking the elder statesman candid questions on the prickly diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Mr Darrion Mohan, a second-year history and politics undergraduate, began by saying that Singapore and Malaysia were “again embroiled in an unnecessary and potentially internecine maritime dispute”, referring to the Johor chief minister’s recent intrusion into waters off Tuas.

He then asked Tun Dr Mahathir, who had earlier given his address at Britain’s prestigious debating society the Oxford Union, if any action would be taken against the chief minister.

“Would you not agree actions like this contribute to the perception that your government is pugnacious, that your government acts in bad faith and that your government... wants a return to the days of confrontational diplomacy and barbed rhetoric?” he asked.

Dr Mahathir did not immediately answer Mr Mohan’s questions, and instead asked if he was a Malaysian.

Mr Mohan then sought to bring the discussion back to the issues he raised, listing the Singapore-Kuala Lumpur high-speed rail project, the airspace dispute over Seletar Airport, the proposed “crooked” bridge between Johor Bahru and Singapore, calls to revise water supply prices and the maritime dispute as indicators that Dr Mahathir wanted a return to the “fraught relations with Singapore” seen during his first stint as premier between 1981 and 2003.

Dr Mahathir responded by say-

ing that the 1962 Water Agreement between the two countries was unfair to Malaysia.

Singapore pays 3 sen (1 Singapore cent) per 1,000 gallons for its supply of raw water from Johor, and sells treated water back to Johor at 50 sen per 1,000 gallons. It costs Singapore RM2.40 to treat every thousand gallons of water. By selling at 50 sen, Singapore is providing a subsidy of RM1.90 per thousand gallons of water.

On the maritime dispute, Dr Mahathir confirmed that “the Menteri Besar went without our permission”, adding that “he thought it was Johor waters, that’s why he went there”.

However, Dr Mahathir said Singapore’s reaction to the intrusion was quite severe, “as if you are going to war”, and described the waters off Tuas as international waters. “It is not Singapore water either, it is international water and the Menteri Besar can go into international water without Singapore sending warships to chase him away,” he said.

Despite his questions not being fully addressed, Mr Mohan graciously surrendered the microphone to someone else to ask questions, but not before clarifying that the waters were not neutral and were Singapore’s according to a 1979 map that Malaysia had tabled.

Dr Mahathir was later asked if he believed it was right for Malaysia to expel Singapore in 1965. Singapore merged with the Federation of Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah in 1963 to form the Federation of Malaysia. Singapore left the federation in 1965.

“... people in Singapore are not compatible with the people in Malaysia. They have a different viewpoint, different ideas about how a country should be ruled, so it is for that reason that they were asked to leave Malaysia, and I think it was a wise decision at that time,”



Mr Darrion Mohan, a second-year Singapore student at Oxford University, had some pointed questions for Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad last Friday. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/DARRION MOHAN



BARBED QUESTION

Would you not agree actions like this contribute to the perception that your government is pugnacious, that your government acts in bad faith and that your government... wants a return to the days of confrontational diplomacy and barbed rhetoric?



SINGAPOREAN STUDENT DARRION MOHAN, in a question to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. It went unanswered.

Prime Minister Mahathir replied.

Dr Mahathir, the first Malaysian and Asean leader to be invited to address the Oxford Union, had earlier defended Malaysia’s record on democracy and his past leadership in his speech.

He spoke about Malaysia’s poli-

tics and the general election last May which led to a change in government for the first time in its six-decade history.

“The election system in Malaysia is proof that we are a democratic country,” the Prime Minister said in his address, which was carried live by Astro Awani.

“In terms of the people selecting its leaders, Malaysia has proven that it is democratic to that extent,” he said, noting that the country has already held 14 general elections.

Dr Mahathir, 93, who was viewed as governing with an iron fist during his first tenure as PM, conceded that the country had draconian laws like the now-repealed Internal Security Act (ISA), which allowed for detention without trial and could be abused by the government against its dissenters.

“There may be some things that did not conform to the democratic ideals, such as the ISA law,” he said, describing it as a statute “inherited... from our colonial masters” that was intended to guard national security.

He also noted that he was called a dictator during his leadership.

“I just would like to point out that in the history of nations, there has not been a single dictator who stepped down while he was in power and allowed others to take over from him,” he said. “Dictators don’t usually resign or retire.”

# ATP Finals likely to be at National Stadium if S’pore wins bid

Nicole Chia

The National Stadium will likely be the venue for the ATP Finals if Singapore wins the bid to host the season-ending men’s tennis showpiece event from 2021 to 2025.

Representatives from the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), which governs professional men’s tennis, were given a tour of the 55,000-capacity stadium and the OCBC Arena by officials here when they visited earlier last week. Another group of ATP officials will be in town from tomorrow.

Singapore is one of five cities vying to host the US\$8.5 million (S\$11.5 million) ATP Finals beyond 2020, together with Manchester, Tokyo, Turin and current host London, where the season finale has been held since 2009. Sport Singapore chief executive officer Lim Teck Yin told The Sunday Times: “We did take them to look at the different venues, the different back-of-house facilities, how we envisage we would connect the overall fan experience, how we would be able to look after the players and how the players would be able to move quite seamlessly across the different venues.”

Adding that the representatives had given feedback, he said: “I think they want for Singapore to make it a uniquely Singaporean experience – they know what we’ve done with Formula 1. They were quite clear it wasn’t about trying to replicate what you see elsewhere.”

Asked how the National Stadium could be reconfigured to stage a tennis tournament, Mr Lim pointed to this year’s Miami Open in March. The event will be held at the Hard Rock Stadium – home of American football team Miami Dolphins – where a temporary court will be built on the field. Mr Lim noted that there were lessons learnt from hosting events such as the Formula 1 and WTA Finals, which took place at the 12,000-capacity Singapore Indoor Stadium from 2014 till last year.

“The success of the Sports Hub... would be better served if there are people from overseas who are also coming to enjoy the event. We have a large stadium and a travelling audience would add to the viability of the event,” he said.

Tennis fan Jerome Low believes the National Stadium would attract a bigger audience because it is a larger venue, though he expressed some concern about fan visibility.

Describing the stadium as a grand venue, the 27-year-old, who is unemployed, added: “The National Stadium is big so you may not see much (action) and it might not be as intimate as the Indoor Stadium.”

However, he added: “If (the event) sells out or hits high numbers in ticket sales, it’s good because more revenue is generated and more people will be exposed to the sport because there’s a larger capacity.”

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Left: Cumnock in Australia is trying to rejuvenate itself by dangling offers to entice people to come and live in the many houses vacated by residents who have moved away. Above: Gangi, a small town in Italy, offered 20 properties for less than US\$2 each in an attempt to revive itself. PHOTOS: SCREENGRAAB/REALESTATE.COM.AU, ISTOCKPHOTO

# Fancy a home for a dollar? There’s a catch

CUMNOCK (Australia) • Like many small towns around the world, Cumnock in south-east Australia has gone through a long period of population decline and fading fortunes.

It was once a key railway stopover in the state of New South Wales, but the closure of the train station and opening of a new highway turned the bustling small town into a picturesque but quiet place, largely off the grid.

As its population dwindled to its current count of fewer than 300 people, residents had for years feared that the town’s primary school might eventually have to close, which would have been a dev-

astating blow for Cumnock.

So they began to wonder how this community – in a region regularly affected by drought and about a four-hour drive from the state capital Sydney – could expand again.

Cumnock did not have expansive shopping malls, attractive restaurants or world-famous museums. But it did have lots of empty houses from all the people who had left.

So in 2008, an idea was born: Give those houses to anyone willing to move here, not only for a fair price, but essentially for free.

For houses in need of renovations, the town would charge a symbolic weekly fee of less than US\$1

(S\$1.35). Renovated cottages would cost slightly more but would still be extremely cheap.

When Ms Nicole Lewis read about the scheme four years ago, she took note. Shortly afterwards, she left her city life and moved to Cumnock with her husband and five kids. “Everyone was so welcoming – it was an instant fit,” she recalled of her first few weeks.

The couple still pay about US\$100 a week in rent for their three-bedroom house, with fireplaces, a back veranda and no immediate neighbours. “It’s the typical Australian country home feel,” she said.

More than a decade after Cum-

nock launched its experiment, the concept has been picked up by over a dozen other towns across Australia and around the world.

Italy’s hilltop town of Sambuca made headlines last week when it announced it was selling homes for less than US\$2, in an effort to halt its population decline as more young residents move to bigger cities where they are pursuing degrees and have better chances of finding employment.

The campaign may sound similar to close observers of the Italian real estate market: In 2014, the small Sicilian town of Gangi launched just such a scheme, offering 20 proper-

ties for less than US\$2 each.

In both Italian towns, like in Australia’s Cumnock, applicants had to commit to renovating the homes.

For young urban families, Cumnock’s initiative may be more attractive now than a few years ago.

Researchers in Europe and Australia have observed that while more people are moving from rural areas to cities, there is also a growing number of people who now find cities so unaffordable that they are forced to move back into suburbs or smaller towns. That could be great news for the Cumnocks, Gangis and Sambucas of the world. The more unaffordable bigger cities become, the more attractive life in smaller towns might appear.

The flight of Ms Lewis’ family and others who have since joined her in Cumnock certainly will not stop the world’s growing urbanisation, with

the proportion of the global population living in cities expected to increase from the current 54 per cent to 66 per cent in 2050.

In fact, these families’ arrival in Cumnock could not even prevent the recent closure of the local pub and hotel. But it might be able to offer these shrinking towns, which are tapping into the right mood at the right time, a much-needed lifeline and boost in confidence.

“Overall, I’d say it’s been successful. It highlights that rural areas’ lifestyle is actually better than in Sydney, and more affordable,” Mr Phil King said as he drank a beer in the local bowling alley that now also serves as the town pub.

His friend Scott Reynolds agreed that the programme has been a boost for Cumnock: “It’s put the place on the map a bit.”

WASHINGTON POST



# WP goal of one-third of seats seen as realistic

Medium-term target achievable, say observers, but the party's performance in next GE is key

**Adrian Lim and Linette Lai**  
Political Correspondents

Workers' Party (WP) secretary-general Pritam Singh's goal for the party to contest and win one-third of the seats in Parliament in the medium term is realistic, but much will hinge on its performance in the coming general election, say observers.

To achieve that target, the WP would have to effect a five-fold increase from its current slate of six elected MPs, based on the 89 seats up for contest in the last elections.

Mr Singh set out the party's direction in a significant speech at a forum last Sunday, where he said its vision must be to "continue building on the sensible approach of rational and responsible politics" established by former secretary-general Low Thia Khiam.

For former Nominated MP Eugene Tan, the speech signals a recognition by the WP that it is at a crossroads in terms of its political future.

Mr Singh told party members last Sunday that the WP held on to Aljunied GRC with a "razor-thin" majority in 2015 – it won with 50.96 per cent of the vote. The party only has a "toehold" in Parliament when considering this result, he said.

In sobering fashion, the WP chief warned: "The risk of a wipe-out with no elected opposition represented by the Workers' Party is a real one."

Associate Professor Tan, a law don at the Singapore Management University, said that if the WP continues to have a "toehold" in Parliament, they will be consigned to the margins of parliamentary and electoral politics in Singapore.

He added that opposition supporters expect the WP – as the dominant opposition party now – to aim high and make headway in the polls.

"Failing which, opposition voters may gravitate to another opposition party," he said, adding: "This gravitation will not be based on the actual 'bench strength' of a party... This choice may well be impressionistic as voters go by how opposition parties campaign during the hustings."

The WP should aim for this one-third in the medium term, Mr Singh said, because of its past experience in "attracting suitable and qualified candidates" who are willing to stand in general elections.

"The political outcome that is desired is one which makes any government sensitive to the pulse of the people and their welfare, allowing any ruling party to govern without gridlock while promoting the political openness that so many of us yearn for in Singapore," he added.

Former Nominated MP Zulkifli Baharudin said that given the strides the WP made in recent years, it now faces the task of emerging as the opposition party among all others – one that embraces all issues relating to Singaporeans.

## WHY ONE-THIRD?

In targeting one-third of Parliament seats, the WP is signalling that it cannot form an alternative government and displace the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) just yet, said Mr Zulkifli.

Amendments to the Constitution – the highest law of the land – require the support of at least two-thirds of the total number of MPs.

This has not been a problem for the PAP Government, because the party's MPs occupy the majority of the seats in the House. The Whip system also ensures that all MPs from the same party toe the party line when voting.

Nanyang Technological University Adjunct Professor Hong Hai said that the ruling party would be unable to pass Bills to change the Constitution without support from some opposition members, in the event that more than one-third of parliamentary seats go to the opposition.

Constitutional Bills would thus require bipartisan support, said Prof Hong, an MP from 1988 to 1991.

He added: "Parliament would of



Workers' Party secretary-general Pritam Singh speaking at the WP members' forum last Sunday, where he laid out the goal for the party to contest and win one-third of the seats in Parliament in the medium term. PHOTO: WORKERS' PARTY

course still be dominated by the ruling party. That would give comfort to the majority of Singaporeans, who want the PAP to continue to rule, but at the same time want to limit its ability to push through unpopular constitutional changes."

As to whether Singaporeans can accept even more than a third of opposition MPs in Parliament, Dr Felix Tan, an associate lecturer at SIM Global Education, thinks the answer is yes.

"I don't think that Singaporeans necessarily set limits to the number of opposition MPs that they would want to have in Parliament. What is important (to them) would be whether the opposition that has been voted in has the credibility to uphold the values of Singapore society," Dr Tan said.

Having a third of Parliament seats occupied by the opposition will not cause a major upset to how Singapore is run, reckons Nominated MP Douglas Foo.

"At the end of the day, it's not about the quantity but the quality of the opposition MPs," said Mr Foo, who is also president of the Singapore Manufacturing Federation.

Singapore's historical record of stability will keep investors coming, and in the short term, a small and open economy like Singapore's is more affected by external economic factors, Mr Foo added.

A trade association representative, who declined to be named, said: "The business community looks at the political landscape five to 10 years down the road, the factions of power that are minding the country, and the kinds of policies they advocate."

"The PAP has been a strong anchor for economic development in Singapore, and the business community is also familiar with the PAP," he said.

Having the opposition occupy a third or more of the seats in Parliament could possibly change how investors and businesses look at Singapore, he added.

But it is hard to say how their views will change, he noted. "Opposition parties have yet to come up with economic plans that are broad-based and demonstrate a firm understanding of the business ecosystem, so it remains to be seen."

Furthermore, businesses feel that the manpower policy is already very tight and "can't imagine what lies ahead if opposition parties want to tighten further", he said.

Dr Tan said Mr Singh's goal to win a third of the seats in Parliament is a realistic one.

"If you look at the make-up of the opposition today, I do not think

they are capable of forming the government of the day. They do not have the cohesiveness of an opposition coalition group," he said.

"What they can achieve is to be a form of check and balance against the ruling party," he added.

Political observer Derek da Cunha said gunning for a third of the parliamentary seats is "reasonable and realistic".

"It is an implicit acknowledgement of the fact that the WP remains a localised party, geographically restricting itself to the east and north-east of the island. It can only expand beyond that area once it consolidates and grows its base there," Dr da Cunha said.

Besides Aljunied GRC, the WP also holds Hougang SMC. It won the Punggol East SMC in a by-election in 2013, but this was wrested back by the PAP in the 2015 General Election. In 2015, it also fielded candidates in the Marine Parade and East Coast GRCs and Fengshan SMC, with pundits predicting hot contests in those constituencies.

Despite losing those contests, the WP candidates secured the highest percentage of votes in Punggol East (48.23 per cent), Fengshan (42.5 per cent) and East Coast GRC (39.27 per cent), which gave the party three Non-Constituency MP seats. Associate Professor Daniel Goh, Mr Dennis Tan and Mr Leon Perera took up those positions.

Dr Felix Tan said the WP would show consistency if the same candidates returned to contest these constituencies.

Prof Hong said the aim to capture one-third of parliamentary seats seems "a little ambitious".

"But this idea may well gain traction as it feeds on the discontent of those who did not like the way the Constitution was changed and interpreted in 2017, resulting in no contest for an anointed presidential candidate," he noted.

The WP's emergence as the dominant opposition party in recent times stemmed from its performance in the 2011 GE, where it became the first opposition party to win a group representation constituency.

Contesting in Aljunied GRC, the team of Mr Low, Ms Sylvia Lim, Mr Singh, Mr Chen Show Mao and Mr Muhammad Faisal Abdul Manap defeated the PAP with 54.7 per cent of votes. The WP also retained its Hougang seat, which gave it a total of six elected MPs in Parliament, along with two NCMPs.

The watershed victory in the 2011 elections broke new ground for Singapore's opposition, much like how WP's Mr J.B. Jeyaretnam became

the first-ever opposition MP after winning the Anson by-election in 1981.

It was a far cry from the party's fortunes in the 1990s, when it was overshadowed by the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) led by Mr Chiam See Tong.

In the 1991 GE, the SDP's three candidates – Mr Chiam, then party chairman Ling How Doong and Mr Cheo Chai Chen – were elected into Parliament. The WP's Mr Low was the only other successful opposition politician then, winning Hougang.

The WP gradually stepped up its game, and fielded 20 candidates to contest the 2006 GE. Mr Low retained his Hougang seat, while Ms Lim became an NCMP.

In April last year, Mr Singh succeeded Mr Low as party chief.

In outlining his vision for the WP to gain one-third of the seats in Parliament, he said: "For a small party like ours, it is a high bar."

## DEFINING MEDIUM TERM

While Mr Singh gave his party members a "medium-term" objective, he did not spell out a specific time-frame.

Observers agreed that securing a third of the seats would likely not be achievable in the coming GE, which must be held by April 2021 but is widely expected sooner, possibly this year.

Still, the party's performance this coming round will be critical to attaining that goal, said the experts.

Dr Felix Tan pointed to two challenges facing the party.

First, he said the Aljunied-Hougang Town Council (AHTC) saga – in which five WP town councillors are being sued for allegedly breaching their fiduciary duties – could make things more challenging for the WP.

He also noted that the WP's chances of capturing more seats could be hampered should the electorate feel the need to give the PAP's fourth-generation leaders an opportunity to perform. The 4G leaders will be taking a "forefront" role in the next GE, as Singapore makes its leadership transition.

Besides putting the AHTC lawsuit behind them, former Nominated MP Calvin Cheng said the WP will have to prove in the next GE that taking Aljunied GRC was not a fluke, as they came close to losing it the last round. The party will also need to win another GRC, he added.

"This will be a process, and will not happen in the next one or two elections. Success breeds success – the WP will have to do better, prove it can manage a GRC town council without controversy, and then build from there," Mr Cheng said.

Prof Eugene Tan said the WP will need to secure a "foothold" in the coming GE, and will likely aim to increase its seats to between 12 and 18. Assuming that the WP can double its number of elected seats at the next and subsequent elections, this will put the party on the threshold of its one-third target by the end of the next decade, he said.

"It's a stretch target looking at it today but the political landscape can change quickly, especially if the PAP loses the trust and confidence of Singaporeans," he added.

Much also hinges on whether the WP can continue to attract good quality members and if the party can be helped by greater opposition cohesion, so that all seats the WP contests for will be straight fights with the PAP, said Prof Tan.

## BUILDING ON PAST LEGACY

Observers said Mr Singh's commitment for the party to build on the approach of rational and responsible politics, as established by Mr Low, puts the WP in good stead.

Dr Felix Tan said this is the right approach. "Still, Mr Singh has to strike a balance between bringing new ideas to the party, and maintaining continuity, as there are voters who support and are more aligned with the older generation of leaders, like Mr Low," he added.

Mr Cheng said the secret of Mr Low's success is focusing on the bread-and-butter issues, and working hard on the ground to listen to and champion them. Mr Singh would do well to follow this, he said.

He added that in any first-past-the-post parliamentary system, one has to appeal to the middle ground.

"I believe it is precisely this PAP-lite approach that has brought the WP success. Overall the PAP is still doing well, and even if some voters may want an alternative voice, they don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. They (The WP) have to continue appealing to the middle ground, the swing voters, and on bread-and-butter issues."

The WP is right to position itself politically as fairly close to the centre ground, said Dr da Cunha.

"That is an astute policy since it is an accurate appraisal of the nature of a large part of the Singapore electorate, in other words, of being either moderate or fairly conservative by inclination," he added.

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## From WP member to chief in 8 years

Mr Pritam Singh joined the Workers' Party in 2010, and became an elected MP a year later, after his team scored a landmark victory at Aljunied GRC.

Last April, he was elected unopposed as the party's secretary-general, taking over the helm from veteran Low Thia Khiam.

The 42-year-old oversees the Eunos division in Aljunied GRC, and has proven popular with residents there. In the 2015 General Election, his ward had the highest vote share in the GRC, of about 55 per cent.

He graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1999, and was awarded the Straits Steamship Prize, given to the top history and political science undergraduate of each cohort.

A 2003 Chevening Scholar, under the British government's global scholarship programme, Mr Singh also holds a master's in war studies from King's College London.

He also holds a law degree from Singapore Management University's Juris Doctor programme.

Mr Singh is married to Ms Lovleen Kaur Walia and the couple have two daughters.

According to his biography on the WP website, "Pritam seeks to persuade more Singaporeans to build and strengthen the roots of democracy that earlier opposition stalwarts have courageously fought to create".

Mr Singh is the vice-chairman of the Aljunied-Hougang Town Council.



# World's cutest dog, 12, dies of 'heartbreak'

**Ng Huiwen**

Boo the pomeranian, who captured hearts on the Internet after he was named the world's cutest dog, has died of "heartbreak", his owners said on Facebook yesterday.

The owners of the 12-year-old dog, who call themselves Boo's humans, said the dog was affected by the loss of his best friend and fellow pomeranian Buddy, which died about a year ago.

They wrote: "We think his heart literally broke when Buddy left us. He hung on and gave us over a year. But it looks like it was his time, and I'm sure it was a most joyous moment for them when they saw each other in heaven."

Announcing that Boo had died in his sleep yesterday morning, his owners added that they were heartbroken, but found comfort in knowing that their dog was no longer in any pain or discomfort.

Boo's friendship with Buddy blossomed in 2006 when he joined the family, who are based in San Francisco. In 2010, Boo shot to fame on the Internet after singer Kesha and reality TV star Khloe Kardashian tweeted about the pint-sized pup.

A photograph of two Pomeranian dogs sitting side-by-side on a dark wicker chair. The dog on the left is slightly larger and has a mix of light tan and white fur, with its mouth open in a happy expression. The dog on the right is smaller, with a more uniform light tan coat and a white patch on its chest, also smiling. The background shows a wooden fence and a building with a balcony.

The owners of Boo (at right) said he was affected by the loss of his best friend Buddy, which died about a year ago. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/BOO

world's cutest dog and his following on social media grew over the past decade to more than 16 million.

He even had three picture books to his name – *Boo: The Life Of The World's Cutest Dog* (2011); *Boo: Lit-*

tle Dog In The Big City (2012); and Boo ABC: A To Z With The World's Cutest Dog (2013).

Thousands of Boo's fans from across the world have left comments in yesterday's post, express-

ing sadness over his death. Within five hours after it was posted, the post received at least 145,000 likes and around 23,000 comments.

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# CPF Board refutes claims that payout age raised

## Eligibility age still 65 for those born from 1954 onwards, it says in response to online message

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**Adrian Lim**

A message circulating online is wrongly suggesting that the Government has quietly shifted the “retirement payout age” from 65 to 70, the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board said yesterday.

The payout eligibility age for the Retirement Sum Scheme is 65 for those born from 1954 onwards, and this has not changed since it was announced in 2007, it added.

The CPF Board was responding to a message that recently went viral on social media, claiming the Government had surreptitiously raised the payout age from 65 to 70.

The confusion was in relation to a letter CPF sends to its members who are approaching their eligible payout age.

A sentence in the letter said "no action is required if you wish to start your payouts at age 70", which gave some people the impression that the payout age was moved to 70.

Responding to media queries, a CPF Board spokesman said the letter was sent to CPF members to inform them that they can start their monthly payouts by completing an application form with their bank account details or applying online.

"They can apply to start their payouts any time between the ages of 65 and 70. If they do not wish to start payouts before age 70, they need not do anything", and "members who defer the start of their payouts will benefit from getting more retirement savings with the

attractive interest that they earn on their CPF savings", said the spokesman.

If CPF members do not take any action, Retirement Sum Scheme payouts will automatically start at the age of 70.

The spokesman said the CPF Act was amended in 2016 to allow for this automatic payout arrangement, which took effect in January last year.

The CPF Board said that before this, some members did not start their monthly payouts even after age 70, as they did not apply to start their Retirement Sum Scheme payments.

The automatic starting of payouts at age 70 "helps to simplify the activation process for members so they can start to enjoy a retirement income from their CPF savings", said the spokesman.

Retiree Johnny Wong, 66, said the way the Retirement Sum Scheme is administered could be made simpler.

Payouts should be automatic when an individual turns 65, and he can have the choice to opt out if he does not want the payout yet, he added.

"There may be some who are illiterate or who may not understand how the current scheme works," Mr Wong said.

Yesterday, the CPF Board also took to Facebook to clear the air, explaining why the message circulating online was “untrue”. It also encouraged users to share its Facebook post.

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Spreading festive cheer



More than 450 low-income households in Sembawang received red festive bags yesterday containing groceries, such as coffee powder, oatmeal and biscuits, as part of an annual charity effort led by the North West Community Development Council. The three-week campaign, "WeCare @ North West - Service Weeks", involves 1,600 community, corporate and student volunteers, like 16-year-old Ng Hui Ming from Admiralty Secondary School (left), who helped to distribute the festive packs. Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan, adviser to Sembawang Grassroots Organisations (above) participated in the distribution at Wellington Circle, together with grassroots leaders and corporate volunteers from Tai Sin Electric. The initiative, which was launched on Jan 12, will benefit a total of 6,500 rental-unit households in the North-West district. "WeCare @ North West - Service Weeks" started in 2014.  
ST PHOTOS: KELVIN CHNG

# Move to stop child abduction by a parent

New measure means ICA can step in when a parent tries to flee country with child

Theresa Tan  
Senior Social Affairs  
Correspondent

The authorities have put in place a measure to prevent children from being spirited away from Singapore when their parents' relationship turns sour.

A parent might resort to abducting their own children when their relationship crumbles, or when they fear losing custody of the child in a divorce.

As of this Jan 1, parents who have been granted a Stop Order by the court can apply for assistance from the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA), should the other parent try to leave the country with their offspring.

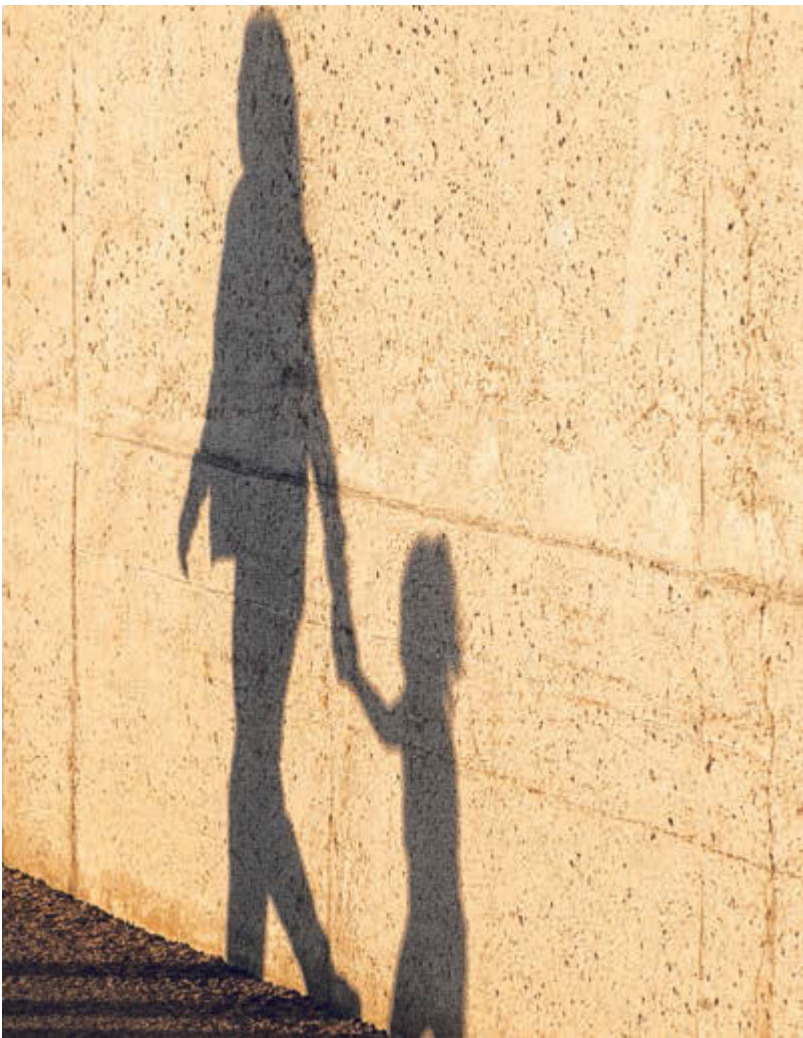
The Stop Order, which applies to all nationalities in Singapore, prohibits a child from being taken out of the country without the consent of the other parent or both parents, or the court.

Lawyers The Sunday Times spoke to welcomed the move, saying they have had clients whose former spouses wilfully breached the Stop Order.

Mr Ivan Cheong said: "Given that ICA is responsible for border control and immigration, their assistance is essential in preventing a breach of the Stop Order by a recalcitrant parent."

With the new measure, the ICA will be promptly notified of any updates affecting the child, a Family Justice Courts spokesman told ST.

Parents applying for ICA's help must file the undertaking with the Family Justice Courts through their eLitigation system before sending the same document to a dedicated



The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction seeks to return a child who has been wrongfully removed from the country he was living in, among other protections. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

ICA e-mail address together with the Stop Order.

At least one working day is needed from when the ICA gets the notice to it being able to act on the Stop Order, said Mr Cheong, adding that a parent can apply for a Stop Order for a child under 21 years old.

Over the past 10 years, Ms June Lim has handled about 20 cases in which one parent had taken their child out of Singapore despite a

Stop Order. She said she notified the ICA of the Stop Orders in these cases. But there was nothing else lawyers could do in the past to ensure the ICA acts to stop the child from being taken out of Singapore.

If a parent breaches the Stop Order, it is tantamount to contempt of court, which carries both civil and criminal penalties, said the Family Justice Courts spokesman.

Offenders can be fined up to

## Mum fled with baby to Singapore

A woman who moved to the country where her husband was working discovered that he was cheating on her.

He subsequently initiated divorce proceedings there.

Overwhelmed by the hurt, she decided to fly back to her family in Singapore, taking her baby boy with her, against her husband's wishes.

Desperate to see his son, the man, an executive in his 40s, turned to The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction - a multilateral treaty to "protect children from the harmful effects" of abduction by parents.

It seeks to return a child who has been wrongfully removed from the country he was living in, so that decisions about his welfare or custody can be made by the appropriate jurisdiction.

In 2010, Singapore acceded to the convention, which applies in cases where both countries have acceded to it and have recognised the other country's accession.

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), which shared this case with The Sunday Times, did not say which country the couple were living in or their nationality, as it could identify the family.

As Singapore and the country where the husband worked were

both signatory states, the Singapore Central Authority (SCA) - which comes under the MSF - contacted the woman, who is in her 30s, to find out what she was going through.

The SCA facilitates the return of abducted children under the convention. It can facilitate a child's homecoming by persuading the parent who wrongfully removed the child to return him.

An MSF spokesman said: "Through discussions, she was able to share her feelings of isolation living with her husband and how she wanted to return to her family for comfort. She regretted running away but was fearful of going through divorce proceedings and custody application in an unfamiliar country."

The SCA advised her to take the

child back to the father to facilitate custody proceedings in the country he was living in to avoid a lengthy legal tussle.

It also asked its foreign counterpart to arrange for counsellors to speak to the woman and for the couple to go for mediation.

The woman took the advice and the couple agreed on custody arrangements after mediation.

Since the SCA was set up in 2011, it has handled 35 outgoing cases when a child was taken from Singapore to a signatory country. It handled 28 incoming cases when a child has been brought to Singapore from a signatory country.

The children were taken to or from countries such as Australia, United States and the United Kingdom in these cases.

As of Jan 10, 61 countries have recognised Singapore's accession to the Hague Convention.

Lawyers say that many Singaporean men take Asian brides, often from neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, which have not signed the convention or recognised Singapore's accession.

Lawyer June Lim said bringing a child back to Singapore from these countries can involve lengthy legal proceedings and private investigators.

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35  
Number of outgoing cases handled by the SCA when a child was taken from Singapore to a signatory country since it was set up in 2011; it has also handled 28 incoming cases when a child has been brought to Singapore from a signatory country.



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# 5 primary schools still running two sessions

4 of them will switch to single session once upgrading is finished

Jolene Ang

When his six-year-old son wanted taekwondo lessons, Mr Moiz She-fuddin learnt he could enrol him in weekend classes only.

He could not opt for the cheaper weekday afternoon sessions because his son attends school in the afternoon with his twin sister.

Mr Moiz's children are in Primary 1 at Tanjong Katong Primary School (TKPS), which is one of five primary schools still operating with two sessions.

Generally, the first session runs from 7.30am to 1.30pm while the second starts at around 12.30pm and ends at 6.30pm.

At some schools, P3 to P6 classes are held in the morning, with P1 and P2 classes in the afternoon.

A Ministry of Education (MOE) spokesman said it "does not man-

date how double-session schools should organise their sessions", adding: "Schools have a range of considerations such as their programmes for the various levels, and the facilities and manpower resources needed to support them."

Mr Moiz, 46, who is self-employed, said: "These enrichment classes on weekday afternoons cater to kids in the morning session. Many people don't know that the afternoon session in schools still exists."

In 2009, the Primary Education Review and Implementation committee recommended that all primary schools switch to a single morning session by 2016.

MOE said then that it was to "provide greater flexibility in time and space for teachers to deliver a more holistic education to their pupils".

Schools have made the switch in phases but out of 184 primary schools here, five have yet to do so.

They are: Nan Hua Primary School, Pei Chun Public School, Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary School, Red Swastika School and TKPS.

The Sunday Times understands that primary schools switching to a single-session model have to be upgraded first.

The upgrading includes re-configuring the school to accommodate facilities such as an indoor sports hall and additional rooms to support teaching and learning.

An MOE spokesman said the five schools will make the transition to single-session once the upgrades are completed.

Upgrading work at TKPS was delayed for about a year. The job was originally scheduled to be completed by the end of last year.

The school is at a holding site in New Upper Changi Road while its original Seraya Road premises are being upgraded.

In a circular sent to parents in 2016, TKPS said: "Due to new planning requirements imposed by the authorities, we need more time... The upgrading plans for TKPS are expected to be deferred by a year."

TKPS principal Caroline Wu said the school is slated to move back to Seraya Road at the end of this year.



Mr Moiz, a Singaporean, also has a daughter in P5 at TKPS. She attends the morning session, which means he has to make different transport arrangements for his three children.

Red Swastika in Bedok North Avenue 3, Pei Chun Public in Lorong 7, Toa Payoh and Nan Hua Primary in Jalan Lempeng, also said their schools' upgrading should be ready by the end of the year.

Pei Chun Public and Nan Hua Primary are now at holding sites in Toa Payoh East and West Coast, respectively.

However, upgrading works have not started at Pei Hwa Presbyterian

Primary, which is off Bukit Timah Avenue.

MOE said it is "working with agencies on the implementation details of (Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary's) upgrading project, and is also reviewing the timeline for the school to transit to single session".

Bank product manager Tan Joo Sin, 44, who has a son in P1 at Red Swastika, said: "He has to forgo his evening playtime with his friends as by the time he reaches home, it's almost 7pm. We are hopeful that the school will be converted to single session by next year."

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Upgrading works to enable Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary to switch to single-session classes have yet to start. It is one of five primary schools still operating double-session classes.  
ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

## Enjoy 'auspicious' rides this Chinese New Year



To celebrate the Year of the Pig, selected MRT trains and public buses have been decorated with Chinese zodiac motifs, and other auspicious Chinese New Year icons, such as gold ingots and cherry blossoms.

The initiative is a collaboration between the Land Transport Authority, Kreta Ayer-Kim Seng Citizens' Consultative Committee and public transport operators SBS Transit and SMRT.

The Chinese New Year-themed trains and buses were launched yesterday by MP Lily Neo (left, in pink outfit), the adviser to Jalan Besar GRC Grassroots Organisation (Kreta Ayer-Kim Seng), who took a ride on the North-East Line. She was accompanied by (from extreme left) LTA's quality service manager, office chief, Chuai Chip Tiong; LTA's deputy CEO, infrastructure and development, Chua Chong Kheng; Moovimedia's vice-president, media catalyst, Shay Chua; and LTA's customer engagement and strategy director Marcus Lee.

The specially-decked out trains and buses will run until Feb 19, the last day of the Chinese New Year festive period.

Commuters can catch these trains on all five MRT lines as well as on buses plying the 80, 143, 166, 147 and 174 service routes.

Selected MRT stations and Integrated Transport Hubs will also sport the same Chinese New Year theme.

ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

## AVA recalls traditional snack after discovery of metal piece

Tee Zhuo

A traditional Chinese New Year snack has been recalled following a report that a metal fragment was found in the mini peanut puffs.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) said in a statement yesterday it had ordered the importer of Da Ji Da Li brand Peanut Puff to recall the product.

"Following investigation, AVA established the fragmented metal piece came from a machine used for making the peanut puffs at the factory," AVA said.

It advised consumers not to consume the product in question.

The peanut puffs, or kok zai, which were sold only at Giant stores, have since been removed from the shelves.

On Jan 12, The Straits Times reported that a woman had bitten on a metal object while eating the brand's kok zai.

Upon hearing of the recall, Ms Foo Yen Png praised the AVA for



Giant has removed Da Ji Da Li's peanut puffs from its shelves after a metal fragment was found in one of the containers. PHOTO COURTESY OF FOO YEN PNG

FROM FACTORY MACHINE

Following investigation, AVA established that the fragmented metal piece came from a machine used for making the peanut puffs at the factory.



AVA

its efficiency. Ms Foo, 48, said that, while she had continued to eat some of the kok zai, she decided to throw the rest away soon after.

In the ST report, the analyst said her father had bought the snack from a Giant supermarket at Block

316B Ang Mo Kio Street 31.

"I was so surprised... Had I not been chewing slowly, I could have swallowed it," said Ms Foo, who showed a photo of the curved, hook-like metallic object.

A Giant spokesman said at the time that the company had apologised to Ms Foo and arranged for the product to be removed from its stores pending investigations.

In its statement, AVA said the product weighs 300g and comes from Malaysia. The affected batch has an expiry date of Sept 30.

Those with queries or are looking to exchange the product should contact the importer, Mac Taste Bakery & Confectionery, on 6284-9119, AVA added.

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# Dengue cases surge, with 455 in two weeks

Rise in mosquito population may lead to more cases in 2019: NEA

Seow Bei Yi

Dengue cases have increased over the past four weeks, with 455 seen in the first two weeks of this month.

This was thrice the number reported over the same two-week period in January last year, said Senior Minister of State for the Environment and Water Resources Amy Khor yesterday.

Over the past year, dengue cases have climbed as well. There were 3,285 incidents last year, almost 20 per cent more than in 2017.

In a Facebook post, Dr Khor said higher temperatures and rainfall

patterns brought about by climate change may encourage mosquito breeding and worsen the spread of mosquito-borne diseases.

Noting that many people will be decorating their homes with ornamental plants during the Chinese New Year period, while others may discard large furniture or household items, Dr Khor said such activities can “inadvertently lead to presence of stagnant water and create more breeding spots for Aedes aegypti mosquitoes”.

She called for community vigilance and action, encouraging residents to clear stagnant water and prevent mosquito breeding.

There was an increase in the Aedes aegypti mosquito population detected in the community, said the National Environment Agency (NEA) earlier this month.

54

Number of active dengue clusters as of Jan 14, according to the NEA.

20%

Increase in dengue cases last year, compared with 2017.

The NEA’s gravitrap surveillance system detected about 40 per cent more Aedes aegypti mosquitoes last month, compared with the same month in 2017.

Gravitrap is a trap that catch such mosquitoes and collect data on them.

“If left unchecked, the high Aedes aegypti mosquito population may lead to a surge in dengue cases in 2019,” the NEA added.

According to the agency, as of Jan 14, there were 54 active dengue clusters. The largest was found in Bedok Reservoir Road and Kaki Bukit Avenue 1.

It added that key to dengue prevention is eradicating mosquito breeding habitats by their source and spraying insecticides to control the adult mosquito population.

Some precautionary moves include turning pails upside down and flipping flowerpot plates, as well as loosening hardened soil and clearing roof gutters, where insecticide should also be placed.

Those infected with dengue should apply repellent to prevent mosquitoes from biting and picking up the virus from them, added the agency.

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Dr Amy Khor visiting residents at Jurong West Street 73 to share dengue prevention tips yesterday.

PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

## Art Stage exhibitors get lifeline to display works

Toh Wen Li

A new pop-up showcase called The ARTery has been set up to display works from exhibitors left stranded by the sudden cancellation of Art Stage Singapore – the country’s main contemporary art fair.

Organised by non-profit group Art Outreach with help from the National Arts Council (NAC), Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and Economic Development Board (EDB), the event will run at a hall in the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre from Jan 24 to 27.

Art Stage Singapore was supposed to have run during the same period in what would have been its ninth edition. However, organisers cancelled it last Wednesday, just nine days before its public opening, citing poor local sales and “unequal competition”.

According to the Art Stage website, more than half of the fair’s 45 exhibitors are from overseas. Since the cancellation, exhibitors – including those who have spent five-figure sums shipping their artworks to Singapore – have been left in limbo.

A number have found alternative venues to display their works as galleries, artists, commercial entities and even home owners stepped forward in a groundswell of support, with some even offering their space for free.

At The ARTery, each exhibitor will have to pay a nominal fee of \$2,000 for a 30 sq m booth, which will come with standard entitlements such as lighting and hanging systems.

The space in Hall A of the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre will be able to accommodate up to 20 booths. Eight galleries are confirmed so far, including London- and Hong Kong-based Tanya Baxter Contemporary and Seoul-based Galerie Gaia.

Admission is free.

“We want to show that (after) what has happened, we can’t leave our friends and guests in the lurch,” Art Outreach chairman Mae Anderson told The Sunday Times.

She added that it will prioritise overseas galleries that shipped their works on or before last Wednesday.

“We are receiving inquiries from exhibitors and would like to extend assistance to as many as possible, especially galleries whose works have already arrived in Singapore,” Ms Anderson said.

“However, there are resource constraints and we may not be able to cater to all requests for a booth. We seek their understanding and are trying to meet the requests as best as we can, given the short timeline, by exploring all options.”

The pop-up showcase is supported by Marina Bay Sands, with help from the NAC, STB and EDB – the three agencies have backed Art Stage Singapore since its first edition in 2011.

A Singapore Art Week shuttle bus moving between Marina Bay Sands, National Gallery Singapore and Gillman Barracks will be available at selected times between Jan 25 and 27.

tohwenli@sph.com.sg

• Visit <http://facebook.com/theARTerySG/> or e-mail [theartery@artoutreachsingapore.org](mailto:theartery@artoutreachsingapore.org)

OFFER OF ASSISTANCE

**We want to show that (after) what has happened, we can't leave our friends and guests in the lurch.**



**ART OUTREACH CHAIRMAN MAE ANDERSON**, on the pop-up showcase set up to help exhibitors left stranded by Art Stage’s cancellation.

## Not teenagers, but they still love K-pop boyband BTS

Desiree Loh and Jan Lee

While many may associate fans of K-pop boyband BTS with adoring teenage girls, there are some admirers of the group who buck tradition.

Nestled in the sea of teenagers who gathered outside the National Stadium hours before the band’s concert yesterday was 64-year-old Lilet Rodriguez.

Mrs Rodriguez, who did not reveal her nationality, was in line to buy BTS merchandise with her 30-year-old niece, who works here as a domestic worker. Mrs Rodriguez, who spent \$404 on two tickets, fell in love with the group’s music in 2017, when a colleague’s teenage children played BTS songs on repeat.

“Their songs make me happy and you can learn lessons from them too,” she said, counting upbeat tunes Am I Wrong (2016) and Idol (2018) among her favourite jams.

“Some people may think that I’m too old, but I don’t care.

“Like what RM said, you just have to ‘speak yourself,’” she said, referring to the boyband leader’s United Nations speech last September in which RM – whose real name is Kim Nam-joon – encouraged people to practise self-love and speak their truth.

Meanwhile, 26-year-old Roxanne Alday emerged from the merchandise booth with around \$700 worth of items, including premium photos of the members, several T-shirts and a few poster sets.

The accountant had flown in from the Philippines to attend the concert and buy BTS goods for herself and around five friends who



Ms Kimberly France (left) giving out snack packs to fans yesterday. She came up with the idea after she realised fans who bought mosh pit tickets would have to queue for hours before entering the concert venue. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

could not be here for the concert.

“I spent around \$125 on Jimin items for myself because he’s my favourite member, and I bought a premium photo of him that I missed out on during their concert in Korea last year,” she said.

Besides Jimin and RM, the other members of the band are V, Jungkook, Suga, Jin and J-Hope.

But beyond merchandise, it is the band’s songs that she appreciates most.

Ms Alday said she was diagnosed with clinical depression last year and the K-pop group’s music

helped her through some dark periods and gave her strength.

One of her favourite BTS songs is Answer: Love Myself (2018).

“The message is so simple. We just have to love ourselves, and that really speaks to me,” she said.

Ms Kimberly France, 29, was among a number of fans who gave out free snack packs to fans milling about outside the Sports Hub Library.

The special education teacher from Singapore came up with the idea after she realised that fans who bought mosh pit tickets

MEANINGFULLY LYRICS

**The message is so simple. We just have to love ourselves, and that really speaks to me.**



**MS ROXANNE ALDAY**, on one of her favourite BTS songs, Answer: Love Myself.

would have to wait in line for hours before entering the National Stadium.

With the help of three friends who were attending the concert with her, she pooled together \$160 to make 100 snack packs that included items like Oreos, tissue packets and gummy bears.

At 7pm, when the concert was scheduled to start, the level of excitement hit near fever pitch.

But the mosh pit was only half filled and fans were still streaming in, having been delayed earlier due to snaking queues outside the National Stadium.

Thousands of fans, who started queueing at 4.30pm in blistering heat, had to go through bag and other security checks before being let through.

The heat and excitement resulted in a number of people fainting outside the concert venue.

Inside, the stadium shook as fans sang along to music videos playing on two large screens, as they waited for BTS to take to the stage.

They chanted and screamed the names of each member of the group while Army bombs – the boyband’s designated concert handheld lights at \$55 each – lit up in sync to the songs.

It was Ms Nazurah Jaafar’s second BTS concert.

The 24-year-old medical technologist attended her first in Seoul last year.

“Just the fact that all these fans are here together for BTS makes me feel really pumped,” she said as she entered the stadium.

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• Additional reporting by Cheryl Teh



# Charities advised to set up endowment funds

Panel also looks at various steps businesses can take to contribute

Yuen Sin

Charities and other organisations in the social service sector can set up endowment funds for businesses and individuals to channel their donations.

The invested capital would provide regular and longer-term contributions for charities, giving them breathing room to focus on long-term goals instead of worrying about short-term funding needs, said National Council of Social Service president Anita Fam.

She was responding to a question on how the social service sector can encourage businesses to contribute in a more impactful way.

Ms Fam was one of three panelists yesterday at the St Gallen Symposium 2019 Singapore Forum.

The event, which brings together policymakers, business leaders and academia, was held at the National University of Singapore's Shaw Foundation Alumni House.

Besides endowment funds, Ms Fam said businesses can work with the social service sector to share expertise they have in their respective fields.

"It is also important to engage millennials, and fresh ideas that come from them... We must be open to those ideas," she added.

This year's symposium centred on the theme "Capital for purpose".

Singapore Pools chief executive Seah Chin Siong, who was also on the panel, said companies must continually question if they are meeting the needs of those they purport to serve.

He said that while Singapore Pools has been channelling its surpluses to good causes through the



(From left) DBS Group CEO Piyush Gupta, National Council of Social Service president Anita Fam, Singapore Pools CEO Seah Chin Siong and moderator Viswa Sadasivan sharing a light-hearted moment at the St Gallen Symposium 2019 Singapore Forum held at the NUS Shaw Foundation Alumni House. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG



Temasek CEO Ho Ching, who gave the keynote address, urged businesses to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact.

Tote Board for the past few decades, the company went through a "soul-searching process" a few years ago – to figure out how it can improve its efforts.

In 2018, it launched non-profit cloud service company iShine

Cloud. The company taps Singapore Pools' strengths in digital services to provide charity organisations with help to build better IT operations and also digitalise their systems.

DBS Group chief executive Piyush Gupta, who was also on the

panel, said businesses should look for synergies with the communities they serve.

This is to ensure that their own goals align with their social missions.

For instance, DBS provides funding for social enterprises, many of which are small and medium-sized enterprises, he said. This aligns with the company's large SME banking business.

"We have to recognise that financial strength is important... (but) you can marry short-term financial strength with a deeply embedded sense among people that we are here for something bigger than this," said Mr Gupta.

The symposium featured a keynote address by Temasek CEO Ho Ching.

She said businesses have a stake in meeting society's needs and improving people's lives.

"For businesses, profits are just a shorthand notation for financial strength and viability.

"Businesses can thrive only if they succeed in meeting the needs of their customers as their primary mission, but that alone is not enough for longevity," said Ms Ho.

In a speech that focused on the environment, she urged businesses to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact.

It is one of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that Singapore, together with nearly 200 other UN members, signed up to deliver by 2030.

Noting a report by the UN climate panel last year which warned of a 1.5 deg C rise in temperature as early as 2030 that could lead to deadlier weather extremes, Ms Ho said Singapore has to move faster in order to transit into a low carbon and more energy-efficient econ-

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

Global warming is one clear and present danger to Earth and mankind. We have only about 10 years to reduce our carbon footprint. There is, as you know, no Plan B for us because there is no Planet B.



TEMASEK CEO HO CHING

omy.

Among the changes that can be made, she said energy consumption for air-conditioning can be halved through the use of large-scale infrastructure, such as by employing more district cooling systems that are seen in the Marina Bay area.

"Global warming is one clear and present danger to Earth and mankind. We have only about 10 years to reduce our carbon footprint.

"There is, as you know, no Plan B for us because there is no Planet B," she added.

She also called on businesses and organisations to continue to invest in people.

While governments can help support basic early education, she said industries and organisations "who know where the needs are and where the technology is driving towards" must all play their part in the continuing education of the workforce.

The Switzerland-based symposium was established in 1970 by the International Students' Committee. This is the fourth time Singapore is hosting the symposium.

Previous iterations in Switzerland featured Deputy Prime Ministers Teo Chee Hean and Tharman Shanmugaratnam as speakers.

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## Join in 15-hour relay for cancer

Shabana Begum

To celebrate four years of being cancer-free, Ms Cynthia Ong and her friends will take part in a 15-hour relay at the National Stadium.

Cancer survivors and volunteers will form teams to jog and walk from 6pm on March 2 in the Singapore Cancer Society-TalkMed Relay For Life 2019.

To symbolise how the fight against cancer never stops, at least one team member must be on the track at all times.

Ms Ong, 42, was diagnosed with salivary gland cancer in 2014. Her treatment included surgery and ra-

diation therapy. She has been volunteering at the annual relay since its inception in 2017.

"I've battled the disease and come out stronger. I also had friends and family members who died from cancer.

"Through the walk, I would like all survivors and caretakers to know that they are not alone in this journey," said Ms Ong, a business office manager.

The event aims to draw about 7,500 participants and raise \$1 million to support the Singapore Cancer Society's (SCS) beneficiaries, and enhance its programmes and services. Last year's Relay For Life raised more than \$830,000.



Local band NationOne and musical duo Jack and Rai will be performing at the event.

After dark, the stadium track will be lit with candles in personalised

bags as a tribute to people who have succumbed to cancer.

With a minimum of 1,500 participants, the organisers will also attempt to break the Singapore Book

of Records for the largest number of people performing a resistance band workout, said an SCS spokesman.

Singapore Press Holdings (SPH)

is the official media partner for Relay For Life 2019.

"Relay For Life is a celebration of people who have overcome the challenges of cancer, to remember those whom we have lost to cancer, and to spur on those who are currently cancer-stricken to fight on," said Mr Anthony Tan, deputy chief executive officer of SPH.

Mr Albert Ching, chief executive of SCS, said: "When the community comes together to walk alongside those impacted by cancer, it is a testament to the message that no one fights alone."

- To register, visit [www.scsrelayforlife.sg](http://www.scsrelayforlife.sg)
- Event: Singapore Cancer Society-TalkMed Relay For Life 2019
- Date: March 2-3
- Venue: National Stadium at Singapore Sports Hub
- Time: 6pm-9am (overnight)
- Cost: \$30 for individual, \$25 for student (23 years old and below) and each team member.

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# Lawyers lobbied 3 years for JI founder's release

Radical cleric due for probation anyway, say lawyers; those affected by 2002 Bali blasts angered by news

**Linda Yulisman**  
Indonesia Correspondent  
In Jakarta

The legal team for radical cleric Abu Bakar Bashir had been lobbying for his release from prison for the past three years, his lawyers disclosed at a news conference yesterday.

Bashir, 80, was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2011 for funding a terrorist training camp in Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh, where syariah law applies.

He is widely regarded as the spiritual leader of South-east Asia terrorist group Jemaah Islamiah (JI) and the alleged mastermind of the deadliest terrorist attack in Indonesia – the 2002 Bali bombings – that killed 202 people, 88 of whom were Australians.

In a surprise move last Friday, President Joko Widodo announced the cleric's release from prison, saying the decision was based on humanitarian grounds and his ill health.

But critics of the President claim it was politically motivated and was connected to the presidential poll in April. Mr Joko, who is seeking re-election, has faced accusations of being anti-Islam and a communist.

To boost his Islamic credentials, he chose as running mate a notable cleric, Dr Ma'ruf Amin, formerly the chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council and supreme leader of Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation Nahdlatul Ulama.

Bashir's lawyers, in an apparent effort to address perceptions that Mr Joko had made a quick decision, said it was instead the result of a long process of repeatedly requesting for his freedom.

Mr Muhammad Mahendradatta, one of the lawyers, also noted that his client was already due for parole and there was nothing "extraordinary" about his release.

Under prevailing rules, Bashir would have been eligible for probation after serving two-thirds of his sentence, a period he passed on Dec 13 last year.



NO CONSIDERATION FOR VICTIMS

**As a human with empathy, I understand that he is old. I empathise with that. But shouldn't the victims and families of the bombings be given consideration? How we would feel about it?**



**MR DEWA KETUT RUDITA**, who suffered burns to 35 per cent of his body in the blasts and was injured in his right eye.

Abu Bakar Bashir (centre) and his visitor, Professor Yusril Ihza Mahendra (right in picture), a legal adviser to the Joko-Ma'ruf presidential campaign team, at Gunung Sindur prison last Friday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Bashir has been in jail since his arrest in 2009 and was sentenced in 2011. He is due to be freed this week.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters yesterday that he has been in contact with the Indonesian government over Bashir's release. "Australia's position on this matter has not changed. We've always expressed the deepest of reservations," he was quoted as saying by Reuters.

Some of those affected by the Bali blasts were also fuming about Bashir's release.

Melbourne man Jan Laczynski, who lost five friends in the blasts, told The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald that Mr Joko should have considered "all the people all around the world who are still suf-

fering because of this bombing".

"Who is next? Ali Imron, the guy who made the bomb? It's frightening," Mr Laczynski said.

Indonesian Dewa Ketut Rudita, who suffered burns to 35 per cent of his body in the blasts and was injured in his right eye, said he was "disappointed, of course".

"As a human with empathy, I understand that he is old. I empathise with that. But shouldn't the victims and families of the bombings be given consideration? How we would feel about it?" he was quoted as saying in The Sydney Morning Herald.

Professor Yusril Ihza Mahendra, a legal adviser to the Joko-Ma'ruf presidential campaign team, has disclosed that Bashir's release

would be unconditional, without his requiring to sign documents acknowledging guilt or affirming loyalty to the Indonesian state and state ideology Pancasila.

Concerns about the cleric's influence in radical networks remain with his release.

"He won't be touring the country rabble-rousing as he had done in the past. But he is very much the elder statesman of the extremist movement, so there will be an endless flood of visitors to his house," Ms Sidney Jones, director of the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict and an expert on terrorism in South-east Asia, told The Sydney Morning Herald.

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## News analysis

# No guarantees radical cleric won't return to old ways



**Francis Chan**

Indonesia Bureau Chief  
In Jakarta

Radical Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir has long refused to recognise the legitimacy of the Indonesian government, and was renowned for his scathing criticisms of Muslim world leaders.

Yet, the ideological godfather of the disbanded Jemaah Islamiah (JI), which was the terrorist group behind the 2002 Bali bombings and other terror plots across South-east Asia at the turn of the millennium, will in days owe his freedom to one such leader.

President Joko Widodo last Friday dropped a bombshell when he confirmed plans to release Bashir from prison, where he is serving a 15-year sentence for funding a JI paramilitary training camp in Aceh.

When pressed, Mr Joko said the 80-year-old Bashir, whose health has been deteriorating, will be freed on humanitarian grounds.

He said he mulled over the move for some time and had taken the decision in consultation with his security czars.

Still, the news came as a rude shock to many observers, including those in Australia, where 88 of the 202 victims killed in the Bali blasts were from.

Canberra has been firm against any leniency for Bashir, whom former foreign minister Julie Bishop described as the "mastermind" of the bombings on the resort island, even though he was never convicted for them.

Some wondered if a deal was cut with Bashir in the interest of national security, but critics were quick to pan the President's decision, announced in the midst of his re-election campaign, as politically motivated.

An early sign of the move may have come in March last year, when senior ulama Ma'ruf Amin said he had suggested to Mr Joko that Bashir deserved clemency due to his ailing health and old age.

It is worth noting that Dr Ma'ruf is now Mr Joko's running mate, chosen last August as part of an election strategy to ward off attacks on the President's own Islamic credentials ahead of the polls.

Analysts such as Mr Adhe Bhakti, however, said it was hard to see then, as it is now, how the President would gain politically, or even in the war on terror, by granting



Tourists at the monument for the 2002 Bali bombing victims before a commemoration ceremony on the Indonesian resort island in 2012. News of radical cleric Abu Bakar Bashir's early release from prison came as a rude shock to many observers, including those in Australia, where 88 of the 202 victims killed in the blasts were from. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Bashir an early release.

Instead, Mr Adhe, executive director of the Centre for Radicalism and Deradicalisation Studies, said that releasing Bashir would likely have a negative impact, especially on survivors and families of victims who were killed in terrorist attacks.

Professor Syamsuddin Harris from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences noted that the timing of the release may indicate that Mr Joko is trying to attract votes from those who support radical Islam.

There are more questions than answers, but one thing is clear: Bashir, despite his poor health, remains a hard-core ideologue who still wields significant influence over militants in the region.

His track record of Islamic militancy dates to former president Suharto's New Order era, when Bashir fought for Indonesia to recognise syariah law while denouncing the country's national ideology Pancasila, which promotes pluralism.

He has also managed to remain

relevant to the cause of establishing an Islamic caliphate in South-east Asia, first as the spiritual leader of JI, and later by pledging allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) while behind bars in 2014.

Recently, a counter-terrorism source told The Sunday Times that Bashir could be linked to the attacks in East Java last May, said to be some of the deadliest in Indonesia over the last few years. They included suicide bombings mounted by a family of six on three churches in Surabaya, and another by a different family of five on the police headquarters in the same city.

The coordinated strikes, which took place within a day of each other, sparked outrage around the world, mainly because the attackers had involved their wives and children, one as young as eight years old, in the bombings.

The source said the two fathers of the families, as well as a third man who was planning a similar suicide attack, visited Bashir in Nusakambangan Prison on Jan 8, 2016. The next day, the three men –

**Abu Bakar Bashir, despite his poor health, remains a hardcore ideologue who still wields significant influence over militants in the region... He has also managed to remain relevant to the cause of establishing an Islamic caliphate in South-east Asia, first as the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiah, and later by pledging allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria while behind bars in 2014.**

Dita Oepriarto, Tri Murtiono and Anton Ferdiantono – returned to the prison to visit Aman Abdurrahman, the terrorist leader now on death row for ordering the attack in Jakarta on Jan 14, 2016 – the first ISIS-inspired strike in Indonesia.

Little is known about what transpired during the visits, but they fit a pattern of behaviour among militants that often precedes an attack.

It was also a key reason why the local prison authorities have tightened visitation rights of terrorist inmates to prevent them from planning attacks and spreading their ideology from behind bars.

Like Bashir, Aman had aligned himself with ISIS and was also serving time for his role in the setting up of the JI camp in Aceh.

In 2014, Aman formed the Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), a group that state prosecutors hold responsible for the widespread terrorism and loss of lives in Indonesia since 2016.

In January last year, the JAD and Aman were placed on a United States counter-terrorism watch list because of their ties to ISIS.

Atrocities committed by JAD had hogged the headlines recently, but Bashir remains a revered figure among militants today.

JAD militants and other Bashir loyalists, including those in Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, will no doubt be cheering his release. But what they will do next is anyone's guess.

Needless to say, there are no guarantees that Bashir will not return to his old ways. After all, he had refused to participate in any deradicalisation programme while incarcerated.

So does Bashir remain a danger to Indonesia and its neighbours?

Indeed, security agencies, including those from Indonesia's partners in counter-terrorism such as the US, Australia, Malaysia and Singapore, will likely be trying to answer that question now.

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Head coach Park Hang-seo giving instructions to a Vietnamese national team player during a recent AFC Asian Cup match. The South Korean has led Vietnam to successful campaigns in Asian and Asean football tournaments and is regarded as a hero by the Vietnamese.  
PHOTO: EPA-EFE



# How football coach and a prince bind South Korea and Vietnam

Friendship also boosted by interest in each other’s food, culture and people, say experts

**Chang May Choon**  
South Korea Correspondent  
In Seoul

He’s no K-pop star but, in Vietnam, 60-year-old Park Hang-seo is as recognisable and as popular as one. The head coach of Vietnam’s national football team became a hero early last year after guiding the youth squad into the finals of the Asian Football Confederation under-23 championship for the first time. The team won a silver medal. Then last month, wild celebrations erupted when he scored another feat by helping Vietnam beat Malaysia to win the Asean Football Federation (AFF) Suzuki Cup.

His raging popularity is just the

tip of the iceberg of the swiftly deepening ties between South Korea and Vietnam. A diplomatic row with China forced South Korean investors to look to the South-east Asian country just as South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s New Southern Policy pushed for stronger engagement with Asean. Relations are bound to deepen if Vietnam, as speculated, hosts the upcoming second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Mr Moon is a key player, helping to mediate between the two sides. Mr Moon, who has visited Vietnam twice since he took office in mid-2017, acknowledged the important role that Mr Park plays, noting how Vietnamese football fans at

the AFF finals waved both Vietnamese and South Korean flags. “I felt both countries have become close friends through football,” he said. Experts say the friendship is boosted by growing interest in each other’s food, culture and people. Tourism has boomed, with 3.29 million South Korean holidaymakers last year flying to Vietnam, mostly to the resort city of Da Nang, almost triple the number in 2015. The number of Vietnamese visiting South Korea also rose from 162,765 to 457,557 over the same period. Official figures show the number of Vietnamese living in South Korea has increased 24 per cent from 136,758 in 2015 to 169,738 in 2017. Most of them are workers (28 per

cent), marriage migrants (23 per cent) and students (16 per cent). In the same way the Vietnamese have embraced K-pop and kimchi (Korean fermented vegetables), the South Koreans have taken a fancy to Vietnam’s flavourful coffee and beef pho (noodles). There are more than 200 Vietnamese eateries in Seoul alone. Retro Vietnam coffee franchise Cong Caphe drew long queues when it opened last year. The love for Vietnamese food was part of the reason entrepreneur Shin Seung-hyun, 33, went on a vacation to Da Nang and nearby historical town Hoi An with her parents and sister in late 2017. “My parents like sightseeing, while I like off-the-beaten paths, and my sister likes idling at the

beach. So Vietnam has a bit of something for everyone,” she told The Sunday Times. Her family even dined at the same restaurant patronised by President Moon when he was there to attend an Asia-Pacific Economic Co-

operation summit in 2017. “Vietnam is exotic enough for us but yet not too different. Our people look similar and have similar manners. We feel safe there, and we can stay in nice resorts that we can’t afford in Korea,” said Ms Shin. Things are also rosy on the economic front. Bilateral trade between the two countries has grown from US\$37.5 billion in 2015 to last year’s US\$68.2 billion (S\$92 billion) – a figure both sides hope will expand to US\$100 billion by next year. South Korea is now Vietnam’s biggest foreign investor, pumping in US\$2.47 billion in the first nine months of last year. The 2015 figure was just US\$1.6 billion. Dr Lee Jae-hyon, a South-east Asia specialist at The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said IT giant Samsung took the lead in investing in Vietnam from the mid-1990s, when South Korea, liberated from three decades of military rule in 1993, was ready to venture overseas. He said Vietnam, which was just starting to open up, was a new frontier and an “obvious choice” because other South-east Asian countries like Malaysia and Thailand were already dominated by Japanese investment. Samsung today is the largest company in Vietnam. It has invested a cumulative US\$17 billion and employs more than 100,000 people. Its local subsidiary reaped US\$58 billion revenue in 2017, with its products accounting for nearly a quarter of Vietnam’s total exports worth US\$214 billion that year. Many other South Korean companies have followed suit. “Everything just snowballed after that and the effect spilled over to other areas like tourism and cultural exchanges,” said Dr Lee.

The friendship between the two sides goes back 800 years, when a Vietnamese prince became a hero in Korea’s Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392). Prince Ly Long Tuong of the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225) arrived in Hwasan in the western Hwanghae province, now North Korean territory, in 1226 while trying to flee from his enemies. When the prince helped to defeat invading Mongolian soldiers, he was conferred the title of Hwasan General and his descendants became known as the Hwasan Lee clan. Nearly 1,000 of them still live in various parts of South Korea, while others are in the North. If plans go well, they will have a Hwasan Lee Memorial Park to call their own by 2023. The North Gyeongsang Province in eastern South Korea announced the US\$38 million project last April, with aims to boost tourism and turn the area into South Korea’s Vietnam Town. Twentieth century ties, however, were a little more complex. South Korea dispatched 320,000 troops to fight alongside its security ally US in the 1955-1975 Vietnam War. Civilian groups in South Korea have lobbied for a formal apology to Vietnam for war atrocities. But late former president Roh Moo-hyun acknowledged only in 2004 that “we have a debt in our hearts” towards Vietnam – words which Mr Moon, who was a close presidential aide to Mr Roh, said twice when he visited the country.

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Vietnamese football fans cheering their national team in an AFF Suzuki Cup semi-final match, with one of them seen here sporting an image of head coach Park Hang-seo on his body as he celebrates victory with others. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Vietnam: A possible model for N. Korea

SEOUL • When North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho visited Hanoi last November, talk was rife that he was sent there to study Vietnam’s “doi moi” economic reforms so that North Korea could emulate the country’s success in mixing communism and economic prosperity. Vietnam has been touted by the United States as a role model for the North if it gives up nuclear weapons and establishes diplomatic and economic ties with the US. But some analysts think it is unlikely, as a more prosperous South Korea stands in the way of the North opening up while the Kim dynasty maintains autocratic control. Dr Hoo Chiew Ping of the National University of Malaysia noted that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had made it clear in his New Year address that “the

type of economic development that North Korea aspires to is one of modernised Juche” – referring to political, economic and military self-reliance. Other experts feel that lessons the North can learn from Vietnam. Diplomatic ties between them go back to 1950. But while Vietnam has flourished from reforms, the North remains closed to the world and depends on China for essentials. Vietnam exported US\$7.3 million (S\$9.9 million) worth of goods, mainly food products, to the North in 2017. There is now talk that Vietnam is preparing to welcome Mr Kim for a state visit, amid reports that Da Nang could be the venue for his upcoming second summit with US President Donald Trump.

Chang May Choon

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# Pahang's new ruler in limelight

Tipped to be Malaysia's next king, sports-loving Sultan Abdullah is said to be down to earth

**Nadirah H. Rodzi**  
Malaysia Correspondent  
In Pekan (Pahang)

The natural attractions of Pahang are well known to Malaysians. The state boasts Peninsular Malaysia's tallest mountain, Gunung Tahan, national park Taman Negara and kilometres of sandy beaches facing the South China Sea, including Club Med at Cherating beach.

Last Tuesday, the country turned its attention to another symbol of the state – the Pahang royal house.

Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah was proclaimed the sixth Sultan of Pahang in Pekan, the state's royal town that is located near the beach. He is now called Sultan Abdullah.

The installation of the 59-year-old ruler puts him in line to become Malaysia's next king under the rotation system practised by the nine Malay royal houses in the country after the sudden abdication of Kelantan's Sultan Muhammad V on Jan 6.

On the streets of Pahang, residents have stories to tell of Sultan Abdullah and his down-to-earth personality.

"I am very proud and happy that His Royal Highness has been proclaimed the new sultan. I'm sure he will do a great job in looking after our well-being," said banana fritter seller Aisyah Mat Idris.

"Whether or not he ends up as king, we're with him," said the 54-year-old, who lives in a village 11km away from the palace.

Said 63-year-old fruit seller Ahmad Amin Abu Bakar of Sultan Abdullah: "He would take the time to chat, or even dine with us whenever he has time to spare. He's always around and that shows the kind of sultan he is."

A keen sportsman from a young age, the ruler played football, hockey and sepak takraw at school, and represented the state in football.

"His Royal Highness – like his fa-



Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, with his consort, Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah. The Sultan is described by his subjects as being a down-to-earth person, and when driving about town, he would randomly pull over his vehicle to play football with kampung boys. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/MALAYSIAN DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION

ther – is an accomplished sportsman, particularly in the field of hockey, football and polo," said Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) appeals committee chairman Thavalingam Thavarajah.

"He adds a personal touch to his official duties by participating in some of the events," Datuk Thavalingam added.

Sultan Abdullah's sporting interest would lead him to head several national bodies, including the Football Association of Malaysia, the MHC and the Royal Malaysian Polo Association.

Kuantan petrol station attendant Noraini Arshad, 39, recalled how Sultan Abdullah would randomly pull over his vehicle whenever he is driving about town to play football

with kampung boys.

"If I'm not wrong, Sultan Abdullah does not really follow protocols, especially when socialising with the locals. It's not odd at all to see him joining in activities with us," she said.

Sultan Abdullah's wife, Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah Sultan Iskandar, often cooks for flood victims and joins in kenduri (feasts) hosted by locals.

"They're always the first ones to lend a helping hand whenever some (disaster) happens," Ms Noraini added.

Tunku Azizah is the younger sister of Johor's current ruler, Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar.

Sultan Abdullah has nine children – four sons and five daughters.

Tunku Azizah is known to be passionate about cooking and started learning how to cook at the tender age of six. She has published two cookbooks.

"I was manja with (close to) my nanny, Mak Namah, and spent most of my time with her in the kitchen. I guess that was when I started my cooking lessons," Tunku Azizah, 58, was quoted as saying by the New Straits Times in an interview published last year.

The royal town of Pekan – about 3½ hours by car from Kuala Lumpur – is also home to two of Malaysia's former prime ministers, Najib Razak and his father, Tun Razak Hussein.

The town is sometimes called Malaysia's Detroit as foreign vehi-

cles are assembled here – including Mercedes, Volkswagen, Isuzu and Suzuki – before being transported to other parts of the country.

Malaysia's Conference of Rulers – comprising the nine state sultans and four governors in states with no royal families (Penang, Melaka, Sabah and Sarawak) – will hold a special meeting on Thursday to elect the next king.

Only royalty will be allowed to vote for a new king in the Council of Rulers.

The Keeper of the Ruler's Seal at the national palace, Tan Sri Syed Daniah Syed Ahmad, has said that the new king will take his oath on Jan 31.

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## Philippines' richest person Henry Sy dies at 94

MANILA • Mr Henry Sy, who became a billionaire by parlaying a shoe store into the biggest retailer in the Philippines, has died. He was 94.

He died in his sleep yesterday morning, his daughter, Ms Teresita Sy-Coson, and Mr Jose Sio, chairman of SM Investments, said.

Mr Sy had a net worth of US\$7.2 billion (\$\$9.8 billion), according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, making him the richest person in the Philippines.

His company started as a shoe store in 1948. Today, SM Investments is an empire that includes SM Retail, which operates the nation's biggest supermarket and department-store chains; SM Prime Holdings, the largest shopping-mall operator; and BDO Unibank.

In the nation of more than 105 million people, his malls attract an average of 3.5 million shoppers a day.

"It's not overboard to consider Sy as the father of Philippine retail," said Mr Astro del Castillo, managing director at First Grade Finance Inc. "His grocery, department stores and malls introduced the one-stop-shop concept in the country, and his malls changed not only the practice of retail but the way of life."

Mr Sy amassed his fortune against the backdrop of unstable governments, political corruption and economic contractions, notably the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998.

He continued to expand his empire with new shopping malls and a bank that eventually became the nation's largest by assets.

Today, the group runs 62 department stores, 56 supermarkets, a network of 194 SaveMore grocery stores and 50 hypermarkets.

Mr Sy was born in Xiamen, in

China's Fujian province. He emigrated to the Philippines at the age of 12 and started selling rice, sardines and soap at his father's neighbourhood store in Manila in 1936.

The store was burned and looted during World War II. Following the war, he set up a footwear store, and later founded ShoeMart, the nation's largest chain and the first air-conditioned shop to sell shoes in the Philippines, in 1958.

In 1972, Mr Sy opened his first department store two months after then President Ferdinand Marcos placed the country under martial law. Mr Sy opened his first mall in 1985, when the economy was in its worst post-war slump.

"Every time the country is in a crisis, I think and decide where is the best way to go," Mr Sy said in a July 2009 interview. "We have to always think of ways to overcome these limitations." BLOOMBERG



Mr Sy, who had a net worth of US\$7.2 billion (\$\$9.78 billion), died in his sleep yesterday morning. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Gunmen kill two monks in temple attack in Thai south

NARATHIWAT • Unknown gunmen shot dead two Buddhist monks and injured two others in an attack at a temple in Thailand's mainly Muslim south, the first such killing of a Buddhist monk in the restive region in more than three years.

An abbot and a vice-abbot were killed when at least six assailants believed to be dressed as members of a government security force burst into the Rattanupap temple in Narathiwat province and opened fire late on Friday, police said.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha and religious leaders condemned the attack in the mainly ethnic Malay province, the scene of a long-running insurgency against Thai rule.

"The Prime Minister condemns this outrageous act and has or-

dered officials to quickly investigate the incident and apprehend these criminals," the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

Thai Muslim leaders also spoke out against the shooting of monks.

"We urge perpetrators of violence in the southern border provinces from all sides to stop killing innocent people and religious leaders," the Sheikhul Islam Office, which represents Thailand's Muslim minority, said in a statement.

Police said the assailants were still at large.

A separatist insurgency has dragged on in southern Thailand for more than fifteen years. More than 6,900 people have been killed and 13,000 injured in the area since 2004 when violence intensified, independent monitoring

group Deep South Watch said.

Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist country but Muslim Malays are a majority in three southern provinces bordering Malaysia.

The three provinces, and a small part of neighbouring Songkhla, were part of a sultanate annexed by Thailand in 1909. Separatist tensions have simmered ever since.

As with most violence in Thailand's deep south, there was no claim of responsibility for Friday's attack. Buddhist and Muslim leaders as well as state officials have often been targeted by insurgents.

At least 23 monks have been killed and more than 20 wounded since 2004, but there has not been an attack on monks since 2015. An imam was shot on Jan 11, also in Narathiwat province. REUTERS



A Buddhist monk looking at bullet holes in the wall of a monk's shelter at the Rattanupap temple in Narathiwat province yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Bali to impose \$13 foreign tourist levy

DENPASAR • Bali is set to impose a US\$10 (\$\$13.60) levy on foreign tourists that will go towards environment and cultural preservation.

The Bali administration has drafted a by-law on the levy, which it has been discussing with lawmakers since last month.

Bali Governor Wayan Koster said revenue from the tourist tax would fund programmes to preserve the environment and Balinese culture.

"This will give us better fiscal space to support the development of Bali," Mr Koster said at the Bali Legislative Council building.

A renowned tourist destination, Bali welcomed 5.7 million foreign tourists in 2017, most of whom came from China and Australia. The number was expected to exceed six million last year, during which the island province hosted international events such as the annual meetings of the IMF-World Bank.

The province has been battling the growing volume of plastic waste on its beaches and in its waters. Some 3,800 tonnes of waste are produced every day, with only 60 per cent ending up in landfill.

Plastic waste became so unbearable that the island's administration last year banned single-use plastics like shopping bags, styrofoam and straws.

It is hoped that the ban will slash the amount of plastic polluting Bali's marine environment by 70 per cent within a year.

Mr Koster said he is optimistic that the tax would not discourage tourists from visiting the island.

"Tourists will understand (the regulation). They will be happy to pay it as it will be used to strengthen our environment and culture," he said.

The Bali legislature is deliberating how the tax will be collected, whether the levy should be included in the airline ticket or collected at the airport. JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



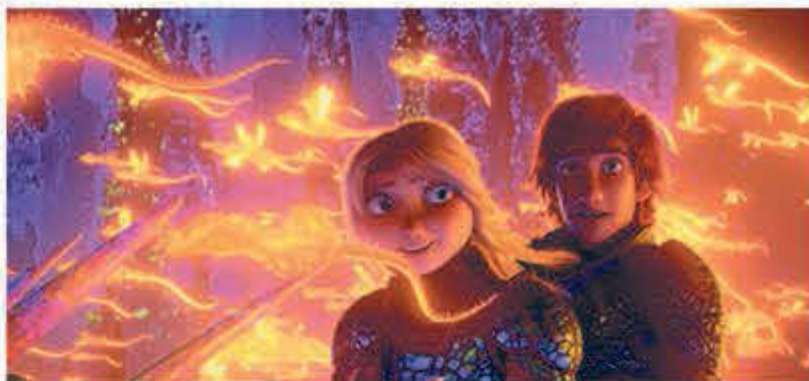
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Photo: How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World © 2019 DreamWorks Animation LLC. All Rights Reserved. Rating: PG



## HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD

From DreamWorks Animation comes a surprising tale about growing up, finding the courage to face the unknown...and how nothing can ever train you to let go. What began as an unlikely friendship between an adolescent Viking and a fearsome Night Fury dragon has become an epic adventure spanning their lives. Welcome to the most astonishing chapter of one of the most beloved animated franchises in film history: How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World.

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Photo: Wafuken

## SOUS VIDE GOODNESS WITHIN MINUTES

Avid home chefs would have heard of the sous vide cooking technique that had taken the culinary world by storm. This modern cooking technique produces delectable food with its natural juices and nutrients sealed in to give you a tantalizing gourmet experience. At Wafuken, you can get such gourmet quality food at affordable prices, fully customizable to your dietary plans and needs.

Wafuken is reportedly Singapore's first sous vide themed restaurant. Sous vide, which means "under vacuum" in French, refers to the process of vacuum-sealing food in a bag, then slow-cooking it to a very precise temperature in a water bath. This cooking technique produces results that are impossible to achieve in any cooking

method. Steaks are perfectly cooked from edge to edge, with no loss in volume when cooking. Salmon is cooked to a translucent pink, with a delicate and flaky texture, with minimal moisture and volume loss while cooking. However, as the saying goes - good things take time. A sous vide cooked meal can take an hour, or even more, to be ready.

At Wafuken, you can do away with the arduous wait and enjoy your choice of sous vide cooked protein within minutes. All protein choices are naturally flavoured with a combination of herbs and spices to give you a delicious, nutritious and precisely cooked meal. To top up the gourmet experience, every meal is fully customisable. Be it a low carbohydrates, gluten free or paleo diet, there's always something for everyone.

Simply begin with your choice of sous vide cooked protein; chicken, beef, smoked duck, fish and prawns. Wafuken prides its

signature sous vide chicken breast to be tender and moist like no other. Steak lovers will not be disappointed as Wafuken serves a well-marbled, 100-day grain fed oyster blade steak cooked to a precise medium rare. Fish and seafood lovers, fret not, for you are not forgotten. You have your choice of Norwegian salmon, saba fillets and airfrown codfish from France, perfectly cooked, moist and flavourful, with its omega 3 goodness fully retained during the cooking process. Starting prices for proteins comes at an affordable price of \$4. Diners can also choose to add on their choice of carbohydrates and sides to complete their meal.

Wafuken is now available for islandwide delivery via their website at [www.wafuken.com](http://www.wafuken.com). Also available for delivery on Deliveroo, FoodPanda and Grabfood, having a healthier sous vide lunch is now easily available within minutes in the comfort of your office.

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Photo: G SPA

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One of g.spa's signature treatments is Gateway to Vitality, a 60 to 120-minute deep-tissue body massage that improves blood circulation so as to promote detoxification and healing. Another noteworthy service is the Chinese Meridian Therapy in which the treatment focuses on specific meridian points to relieve aches and stress.

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# Model who says she has Trump info held in Russia

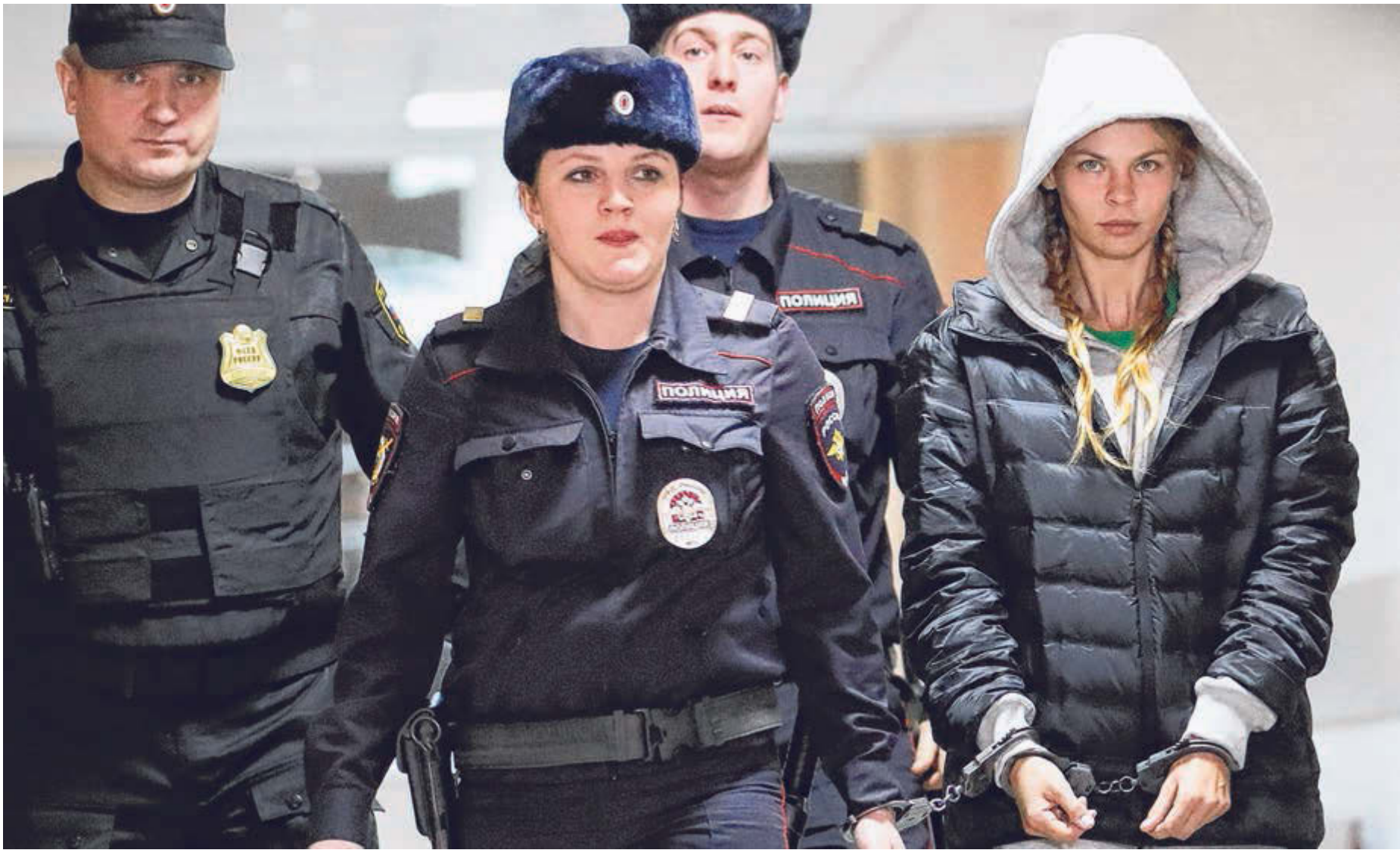
MOSCOW • A Belarusian model who claimed she had proof of Russian collusion with the Trump election campaign was held in custody after police “dragged” her from a transit zone in Moscow’s airport, her lawyer told Agence France-Presse.

Anastasia Vashukevich, known as Nastya Rybka, was in jail in southern Moscow after being detained last Friday with several others at the airport. They flew in after being deported from Thailand, where they had spent a year in prison for participating in a “sex training course”.

A Russian lawyer representing Vashukevich branded the arrest an “international scandal”, saying his client had “committed no crimes” and was planning to travel on to Belarus. Instead she was “moved from the transit zone onto the Russian territory by unidentified law enforcement employees”, said Mr Dmitry Zatsarinsky.

He said employees in civilian clothes “dragged her out of the transit zone” and added that he was planning to lodge an official complaint.

Mr Zatsarinsky posted a video on his Instagram that shows five or six men trying to force a young woman resembling Vashukevich into a



Belarusian model Anastasia Vashukevich being escorted before a court hearing in Moscow yesterday. She was convicted in Thailand last week after she pleaded guilty to multiple charges, including soliciting and illegal assembly. She claimed to have proof of Russian collusion with the Trump election campaign and pleaded for US help, fearing prosecution in Russia. PHOTO: REUTERS

wheelchair as she tries to break free. They then abandoned their efforts and simply carried her through what appeared to be one-way double doors typically used in airports.

Vashukevich was convicted in Thailand earlier last week after nearly a year in jail, following her arrest in a seaside resort of Pattaya.

She pleaded guilty to multiple charges, including soliciting and illegal assembly. She was part of a group participating in a seminar led by Russian self-styled seduction guru Alex Kirillov. The court convicted her and seven co-defendants.

She had travelled to Thailand after sparking a political scandal

when she posted a video allegedly showing tycoon Oleg Deripaska and an influential Russian deputy prime minister relaxing on a yacht.

Mr Deripaska later sued her for invasion of privacy.

While in Thai custody, she claimed she had information about alleged Russian meddling in the

2016 US election and pleaded for US help, fearing prosecution in Russia.

Mr Zatsarinsky said that some people in the group had been deported to Belarus via Ukraine, rather than Russia, and faced no problems at the airport in Kiev.

Russian police late last Thursday confirmed Russian and Belarusian

citizens were detained in Sheremetyevo airport on arrival from Thailand as part of an ongoing probe into “coercion into prostitution”.

Last Friday morning, two men and two women remained in police custody, the interior ministry was cited by Russian agencies as saying. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

# US wants regular reviews of China reforms

## Washington may turn to tariffs again if Beijing is caught violating trade deal, say sources

WASHINGTON • The United States is pushing for regular reviews of China’s progress on pledged trade reforms as a condition for a trade

deal – and could again resort to tariffs if it deems that Beijing has violated the agreement, according to sources briefed on negotiations

to end the trade war between the two nations.

A continuing threat of tariffs hanging over commerce between the world’s two largest economies would mean a deal would not end the risk of investing in businesses or assets that have been impacted by the trade war.

“The threat of tariffs is not going away, even if there is a deal,” said one of three sources briefed on the talks who spoke with Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Chinese negotiators were not keen on the idea of regular compliance checks, the source said, but the US proposal “didn’t derail negotiations”.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has imposed import tariffs on Chinese goods to put pressure on Beijing to change its policies on intellectual property protection, technology transfers, industrial subsidies and other trade barriers.

An enforcement and verification process is unusual for trade deals and is akin to the process around punitive economic sanctions such as those imposed on North Korea and Iran.

Regular reviews would be one potential solution to address a demand from Mr Lighthizer for ongoing verification of any trade pact between the two countries, three sources familiar with the talks told Reuters.

“If China can show compliance through a process like this, it would also be a trust-building measure for both sides,” said Ms Erin Ennis, senior vice-president of the US-China Business Council, a trade group representing US companies doing business in China.

Mr Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed last month to a 90-day truce in the trade war to give their teams time to negotiate a deal. Nearly 50 days later, there is little sign that China will make the concessions the US is seeking.

However, China has offered to go on a six-year buying spree to ramp up imports from the US, according to officials familiar with the negotiations.

**“The threat of tariffs is not going away, even if there is a deal,” said one of three sources briefed on the talks who spoke with Reuters on condition of anonymity.**

**Chinese negotiators were not keen on the idea of regular compliance checks, the source said, but the US proposal “didn’t derail negotiations”.**

By increasing goods imports from the US by a combined value of more than US\$1 trillion over that period, China would seek to reduce its trade surplus – which last year stood at US\$323 billion – to zero by 2024, one of the sources said.

The officials asked not to be named as the discussions are not public.

The offer, made during talks in Beijing earlier this month, was met with scepticism by US negotiators who demanded that the imbalance be cleared in the next two years.

Economists who have studied the trade relationship argue that it would be hard to eliminate the gap, which is sustained in large part by US demand for Chinese products. REUTERS, BLOOMBERG

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## WorldBriefs

### Tharman, ministers of state visiting Riyadh

Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies Tharman Shanmugaratnam is on an official visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, since yesterday, the Prime Minister’s Office said yesterday.

He is accompanied by Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Maliki Osman, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Koh Poh Koon, and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Monetary Authority of Singapore.

They will return tomorrow.

### 500,000 protesters at anti-Modi rally in India

KOLKATA • India’s opposition

parties drew half a million supporters to Kolkata’s streets yesterday for the largest show of force against Prime Minister Narendra Modi before the polls expected in April and May.

The “Unite India” rally saw leaders from across the opposition spectrum rail against Mr Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

### Protests in Bangkok over voting dates

BANGKOK • Rival groups held demonstrations in Thailand’s capital yesterday, with hundreds demanding quick elections to end military rule, and a much smaller group of pro-junta supporters saying it was too soon for a vote.

No date has been set for the elections, which were first promised for 2015 and most recently postponed from Feb 24.

Hundreds joined a demonstration calling for elections on March 10. The Election Commission has given March 10 or March 24 as possible polling dates. REUTERS

### US, China space agencies work on exploring moon

WASHINGTON • The space agencies of the United States and China are coordinating efforts on moon exploration, NASA said last Friday, as it navigates a strict legal framework aimed at protecting national security and preventing technology transfer to China.

Nasa has been in talks to explore the possibility of observing “a signature of the landing plume” of China’s lunar lander Chang’e 4, using its spacecraft instrument, said a Nasa official. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



# Trump put lawmakers' lives at risk, says Pelosi

US House Speaker accuses President of leaking her team's Afghanistan travel plans

WASHINGTON • House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has accused President Donald Trump of putting her and fellow lawmakers in danger by publicising their travel plans to Afghanistan, forcing them to abandon the trip, a breathtaking allegation against the commander-in-chief as their feud escalated and the government shutdown dragged on.

Ms Pelosi said last Friday the State Department had determined that the trip could no longer be made without endangering the safety of lawmakers, as well as troops and support personnel.

The accusation came a day after Mr Trump had denied Ms Pelosi the use of military aircraft, forcing her to make plans to fly by a commercial airline to Afghanistan – before she abandoned that plan, too, accusing the administration of leaking word of it.

“You never give advance notice of going into a battle area – you just never do it,” Ms Pelosi told reporters at the Capitol. “Perhaps the President’s inexperience didn’t have him understand that protocol. The people around him, though, should have known that, because that’s very dangerous.”

The White House forcefully denied Ms Pelosi’s claims.

The bickering between Mr

Trump and Ms Pelosi has emerged as a proxy battle in the record-breaking partial government shutdown, which entered its 29th day yesterday, with no signs of any negotiations. The result has been a political clash like few others, as the leaders of two of the nation’s three branches of government leverage the powers of their office against one another, all the while trying to shape public sentiment.

The spat left some lawmakers downcast over prospects of finding an end to the partial government shutdown that has forced 800,000 federal workers to go without pay since Dec 22.

“I think it was irresponsible for Nancy Pelosi to cancel the State of the Union, and then I think it was wrong for the President to cancel the plane,” said Senator Rob Portman. “I think they’re both making it more difficult, not easier, for us to find a resolution to this impasse.”

Ms Pelosi wrote Mr Trump a letter earlier last week suggesting he reschedule his Jan 29 State of the Union address over security concerns stemming from the nearly month-long partial government shutdown.

The furloughed workers and those forced to work without pay will soon miss another pay packet



A queue last Thursday outside chef Jose Andres' World Central Kitchen, which served free meals to federal workers and their families during the partial government shutdown. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

A donation jar for coast guards at King's Diner in Kodiak, Alaska, last Wednesday. The shutdown has brought a particular chill to the small town, which depends on the Coast Guard base. PHOTO: NYTIMES

## Trump firm on wall but will offer incentives to Democrats: Source

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump plans to renew his demand for a border wall but also offer incentives to congressional Democrats in an announcement that will not include a declaration of a national emergency, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The person would not discuss what Mr Trump planned to offer to the Democrats, who now control the US Congress, beyond saying that it may have something to do with immigration.

The Democrats, who have adamantly refused his demands for US\$5.7 billion (\$7.7 billion) for the wall, have called for protections for young immigrants who came to the US as children, and other immigration reforms.

The dispute over the wall led to a partial government shutdown that entered its 29th day yesterday.

Although Mr Trump hinted that he might declare a national emergency to bypass Congress and fund the wall if other options failed, he does not plan to do so in his announcement, which will take place at 3pm yesterday (4am Singapore time today), according to the person, who was granted anonymity to discuss the announcement beforehand.

With no end in sight for the shutdown, cultural institutions from Massachusetts to Oregon are moving to help unpaid federal workers spend some of their otherwise idle hours with loved ones enjoying art, science history or music.

Non-profit World Central Kitchen – founded by world renowned chef Jose Andres, who has helped feed hurricane victims in Puerto Rico and flood survivors in Houston – said it served free meals to more than 5,500 furloughed government employees last Thursday.

“It brings the federal community together and a lot of us are still working without pay,” Department of Justice worker Dawn Win said. “It makes us continue to want to work.”

BLOOMBERG, REUTERS

unless the shutdown is somehow resolved, a fact that White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said last Friday made it imperative for Ms Pelosi to stay in the country this weekend.

“That’s one of the key reasons the President did not want Speaker Pelosi to leave the country, because if she did, it would all but guarantee the fact that negotiations couldn’t take place over the weekend,” Ms Sanders told reporters.

But Ms Pelosi’s spokesman, Mr

Drew Hammill, said the White House has not sought to schedule negotiations with the Speaker for this weekend. Mr Trump himself said on Twitter on Friday evening that he would be making an announcement on the border and the shutdown yesterday afternoon.

Representative Elaine Luria, one of the lawmakers who were set to accompany Ms Pelosi on the Afghanistan trip, said in an interview that the delegation spoke at around 6am last Friday and de-

cided to put off the four-day trip.

“I was dressed and ready to go, ready to walk out the door with my suitcase,” she said. “The removal of the use of transportation was the first step. The second was the disclosure of travel by commercial air. All protocols for safety, security were broken in the fact that all that information was made public.”

Ms Luria, a 20-year US Navy veteran, was the only freshman member invited to join the trip with Ms Pelosi and five other lawmakers.

Ms Luria recalled that during her military service, a senator from her home state of Alabama was part of a delegation visiting the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier.

“It was meaningful to have lawmakers who are involved in the decision-making process come see with their own eyes how the operations were going and hear what the concerns were of the sailors,” she said. “It showed that lawmakers don’t just sit in Washington.”

WASHINGTON POST



The Jinan train station in eastern China's Shandong province seeing its first peak passenger volume last Thursday before the Spring Festival travel rush begins. PHOTO: XINHUA

# Chinese told to behave ahead of festive mass migration

Danson Cheong  
China Correspondent  
In Beijing

The Chinese authorities have vowed to crack down on uncivilised behaviour on public transport as the country’s largest annual migration of people fast approaches.

Tens of millions of Chinese will be hitting the road to return to their hometowns for the Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, with most of them packing into buses and others into trains and planes for the journey home.

This year’s spring rush, or *chunyun*, will see nearly three billion

trips made during the 40-day festive period, the authorities reckon.

It is also certain to push China’s transportation system to its limits – scenes of chaos on board trains or at transport hubs will be common.

In a bid to minimise the chaos, China’s national planning body, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), warned last Friday that those who cause a nuisance on trains, flights and buses, or who wrongfully occupy seats, will be severely punished.

Said NDRC deputy director Lian Weiliang: “A very important reason why untrustworthy and uncivilised actions that violate order on public transport occur frequently is that

the cost (of being a nuisance) is too low. An effective way to solve this is through comprehensive punishment.”

Travellers who behave in such a manner can be fined and detained by security agencies, and also black-listed and restricted from buying train or plane tickets for a period of time, said Mr Lian.

A record will also be entered into the offender’s personal social credit history, he added.

His comments, at a briefing for the media on preparations by government agencies for the upcoming travel season, come about a week after the NDRC and eight other government agencies issued

a notice calling for stiff punishment for those who misbehave on public transport.

Mr Lian told reporters that since March last year, the numbers of people who have been put on aviation and rail blacklists are 4,209 and 1,793 respectively.

Incidents involving rude and uncouth passengers make the headlines regularly. In some cases, there were fatal consequences.

Last October, a bus in Chongqing plunged into a river after a passenger attacked the driver because she had missed her stop. The crash killed all 15 people on board.

Mr Lian praised the media for shining the spotlight on such bad

behaviour, noting that the number of such cases has dropped.

Besides penalties, the authorities will set up a platform on social networking app WeChat to allow people to flag either bad or praiseworthy civic-minded behaviour.

Those who misbehave “must realise the serious consequences of such untrustworthy actions, so trustworthy and civilised behaviour becomes more commonplace”, said Mr Lian.

At Friday’s briefing, officials said about 2.99 billion trips are expected to be made during the 40-day Spring Festival travel rush from tomorrow until March 1. This is 0.6 per cent higher than the num-

ber of trips made last year.

About 2.46 billion of those trips will be made by long-distance coaches or cars, while 413 million journeys will be made by train.

Air travel will take up 73 million trips, and is the fastest-growing mode of transport, which saw a 12 per cent increase from last year. The remaining journeys are by boat.

Vice-Minister for Transport Liu Xiaoming reminded travellers to behave in a civilised manner so as to ensure a “peaceful and smooth” journey for everyone returning home to be reunited with their families.

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# Australia forced to adapt as summers get hotter

As roads melt in record-high temperatures, residents told to guard against heat stress

**Jonathan Pearlman**  
For The Sunday Times  
In Sydney

For residents in the inland Australian town of Wagga Wagga, the soaring temperatures in recent days came with at least a benefit: free entry to the local swimming pool.

Town mayor Greg Conkey announced last Thursday that the local aquatic centre would offer free entry whenever the temperature reached 41 deg C or higher.

However, it turned out that the mercury reached this level every day last week. On Thursday, the temperature hit 45.2 deg C, the highest recorded in the town's 170-year history.

At the pool, local resident Bo McNair welcomed the move, saying it was vital for people without air-conditioning.

"In this heatwave, I think this is a really great idea," she told The Daily Advertiser, the town's newspaper, on Thursday.

"A lot of these underprivileged

**In recent days, at least 20 weather records are already believed to have been broken. The nation's capital, Canberra, set a new record of four consecutive days at or above 40 deg C.**

kids don't have air-conditioning at home and if they can come here for free, parents are likely to bring them because they can't afford to pay A\$4 (\$\$3.90) for each child."

Australia is in the grip of a record-breaking run of summer heat, which has prompted residents and authorities across the country to find ways to cope.

The authorities have already ordered the speed of trains in parts of Sydney to slowdown by 10kmh, and there have been calls for greater workplace protection for those working outdoors.

The authorities have also advised people to take care to avoid heat stress and be alert to symptoms such as dizziness and tiredness.

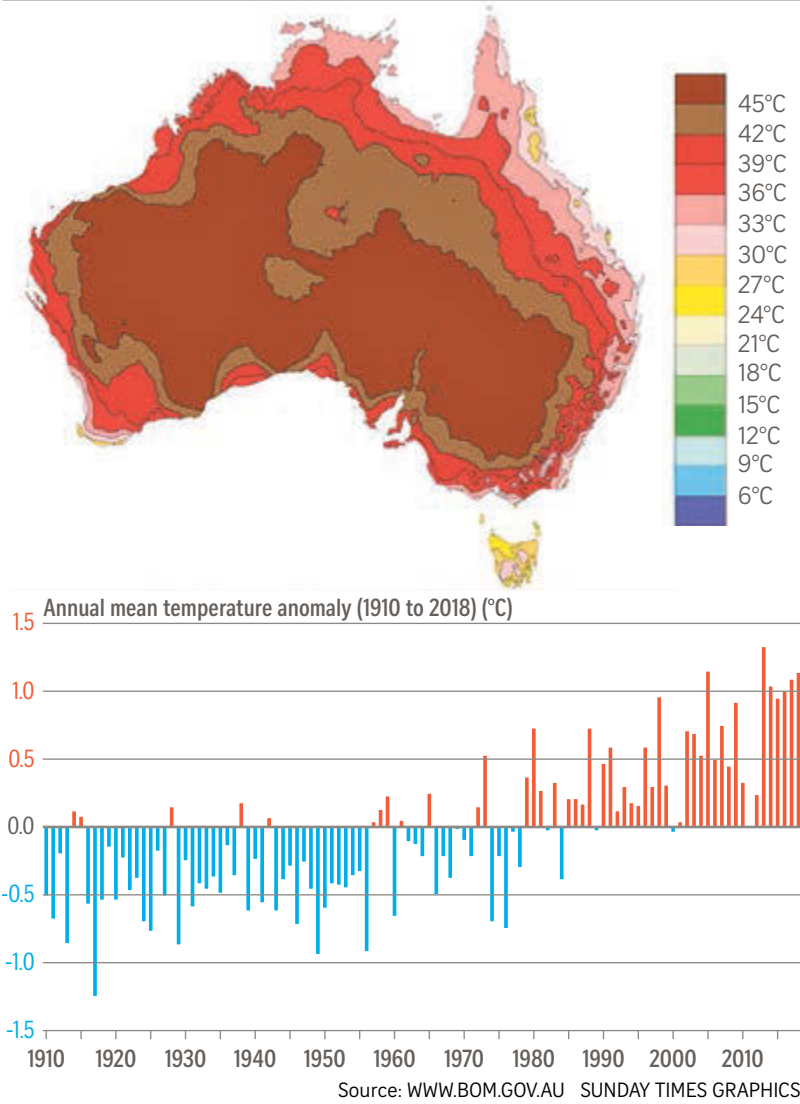
In New South Wales (NSW), the ambulance service reminded parents not to leave their babies and children in locked cars, even briefly. Paramedics said the temperatures could cause heat stress that could be fatal.

"It's parent inattention that's the main cause," NSW Ambulance Inspector Brian Parsell told Sydney's Daily Telegraph yesterday.

Since last Monday, at least nine children have been recovered by ambulance crews from locked cars. Separately, a pair of six-week-old twin babies suffered heat exhaus-

## Red hot Australia

Weekly highest maximum temperatures for Australia for the week ended Friday



tion last Thursday while travelling on a highway in a car without air-conditioning.

In central NSW, workers had to spray water on a highway near Port Macquarie after sections began melting last Thursday. The Macleay

Argus newspaper reported online.

In recent days, at least 20 weather records are already believed to have been broken. The nation's capital, Canberra, set a new record of four consecutive days at or above 40 deg C.

# Climate change a national security issue: Pentagon

WASHINGTON • Many of the US military's key installations are facing increasing difficulties due to climate change, the Pentagon has said in a report critics slammed as understating the scope of the problem.

The 22-page document released last Friday looked at 79 "priority" facilities around the US and found many vulnerable to flooding and wildfires, as well as the impacts of desertification, drought and melting permafrost.

"The effects of a changing climate are a national security issue

with potential impacts to Department of Defence missions, operational plans and installations," the document states.

The military "must be able to adapt current and future operations to address the impacts of a variety of threats and conditions, including those from weather and natural events".

The report found about two-thirds of the 79 installations are or will be vulnerable to recurrent flooding, and more than half are vulnerable to current or future drought.

At Fort Greely, an Alaskan facil-

ity that is a key component of the US' missile-defence system, melting permafrost will impact cold weather testing and training.

But critics blasted the report for skimping on detail, noting it did not mention several recent hurricanes that destroyed or damaged US military facilities.

Hurricane Michael, for instance, last year wrecked Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. It will cost more than US\$5 billion (\$\$6.8 billion) to rebuild.

President Donald Trump has openly dismissed claims – backed

by the vast majority of important scientific bodies – that greenhouse gases caused by human activity are responsible for a rapidly warming planet, triggering ever more extreme weather.

He once claimed climate change is a Chinese hoax, and has rolled back US environmental regulations aimed at curbing the problem.

"Under current leadership, the (Defence) Department is treating climate change as a back-burner issue," said Senator Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee.

The Pentagon under Mr Barack Obama repeatedly warned that climate change posed an immediate risk to national security, and former defence secretary James Mattis warned it impacted political stability in areas of the world where US troops operate.

The report was delivered to Congress last Thursday, but the Pentagon only published it online on Friday after reporters asked about it.

The Centre for Climate and Security said the report did not provide all the details required by Congress. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Mexican soldiers standing guard near a fire after a leaking fuel pipeline triggered a blaze in Tlahuelilpan, Hidalgo state, last Friday. The blast at the pipeline, which was suspected to have been ruptured by thieves, killed 21 people and injured dozens more. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/SECRETARIA DE DEFENSA NACIONAL

# Mexican President vows to get tougher on fuel theft

MEXICO CITY • Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has pledged to step up efforts to stamp out fuel theft after an explosion at a pipeline killed at least 66 people and injured dozens more.

The blast at the pipeline, which was suspected to have been ruptured by thieves, sent flames shooting into the skies in the municipality of Tlahuelilpan, in the central state of Hidalgo, last Friday.

Video footage showed residents scrambling to fill containers from

the burst pipe and badly burned victims, raising questions about the management of an issue Mr Lopez Obrador has made a top priority since taking office on Dec 1.

He launched a crackdown on fuel theft on Dec 27 and ordered pipelines to be closed temporarily to stop illegal taps draining billions of dollars from heavily indebted state oil firm Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex).

"Far from stopping the fight... against fuel theft, it's going to be-

come stronger; we'll continue until we've eradicated these practices," Mr Lopez Obrador, who has said he will step up the security presence in sensitive areas, said yesterday.

Video on social media of people filling buckets from the pipeline during daylight hours in the presence of the armed forces prompted questions about why the authorities had not acted.

The government said soldiers reached the scene after Pemex detected the illegal tap, but could not

secure the area in time.

"At some point, there were too many people there and the army and military personnel withdrew to avoid problems," Public Security Minister Alfonso Durazo told broadcaster Televisa.

"It was just as they were withdrawing that the explosion occurred."

Hidalgo Governor Omar Fayad said yesterday that 66 people had been killed and 76 injured in the explosion. REUTERS

According to Weatherzone, other records to topple occurred in the NSW town of Noona, which experienced the nation's highest minimum temperature of 35.9 deg C, and the South Australian town of Tarcoola, which reached 49 deg C, its hottest day ever.

Thankfully, yesterday brought a much-needed cool respite across the populous south-east coast, though temperatures are forecast to rise again later this week. Inland temperatures remained high yesterday, with towns such as Wagga Wagga experiencing a so-called "cool change" of 38 deg C, not quite high enough for free pool entry.

But temperatures have soared on the west coast, with Perth experiencing 40 deg C yesterday.

Australians have become increasingly accustomed to record-breaking hot summers in recent years.

According to a report last month by the Bureau of Meteorology and the national science agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, global climate change has led to warmer temperatures in Australia, which has caused an increase in extreme weather events and more severe droughts. The report said Australia has warmed by just over 1 deg C since 1910 and that most of this occurred since 1950.

"Over coming decades, Australia will experience further increase in temperatures, with more extremely hot days and fewer extremely cool days," the report said.

Experts have urged Australia to adopt tougher action to curb carbon emissions, including encouraging a shift to renewable energy and low-carbon electricity generation.

A report on the health impacts of climate change, published in November by a group of scientists in the Medical Journal of Australia, said the nation's "policy inaction" posed a threat to Australian lives.

jonathanmpearlman@gmail.com

## Weather

### Singapore

24/33°C

## Today

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.

## Outlook

**Monday:** Afternoon thundery showers.  
**Tuesday:** Windy with passing showers.

## Air quality

PSI  
30-54 (Moderate)  
24-hour reading as of 4pm yesterday

Sunrise  
7.14am

Sunset  
7.18pm

Moonrise  
6.28pm

Moonset  
5.59am

### North

Showers

### South

Showers

### East

Showers

### West

Showers

### Central

Showers

## Tides

**Today:** 3:52am (1.6m), 9:48am (3.1m), 4:22pm (0.4m), 11:45pm (2.9m).  
**Tomorrow:** 4:43am (1.6m), 10:37am (3.2m), 5:11pm (0.2m).



# Sport



**Down to the wire**  
Yoshinori Fujimoto leads by one going into the final day at SMBC Singapore Open.  
A26

## GAMBLING RETURNS TO BOWLING CENTRES

Sources say it still exists at some of the 24 bowling centres, after Shin Min’s report on such activity at Orchid Bowl

David Lee

The bets range from \$1 to a couple of thousands, and some punters even blatantly throw \$1,000 bills on the table for the bookmakers to collect.

This is not some dingy gambling den in a back lane. Rather, such activities take place under the bright lights of some bowling centres here, mostly during in-house leagues and competitions.

And sources tell The Sunday Times that the daily turnover can run into the tens of thousands.

Explaining the betting mechanics (see sidebar), Mark, a social bowler who spoke on condition of anonymity, added: “The hardcore gamblers can bet a few thousand on a single throw, and such big bets may be split among the bookies, who usually carry a few thousand dollars with them for cash payouts.

“It is an ecosystem – most bowlers are not there to win the competition but they want to have a flutter; bookies are willing to accept bets and offer decent odds, which in turn attract more bowlers. “Some bowling centres mostly turn a blind eye as these activities mean better business for them.”

The spotlight is on the problem after Shin Min Daily reported last

week that 14 out of the 36 lanes at Orchid Bowl @ Orchid Country Club in Yishun were used for such illegal bets and at least three bookies were seen accepting cash bets, with \$5, \$10 and \$50 notes exchanging hands among more than 60 punters.

Under the Common Gaming Houses Act, anyone gambling in public shall be punishable with a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or jailed up to six months. It is also illegal to facilitate such activities, with penalties including fines that range from \$20,000 to \$200,000 and up to five years’ jail.

In 2001, more than 20 people were arrested for loitering and betting on bowling games. They were charged in court and fined.

Such activities were widespread in the 1980s and 1990s, until the Singapore Bowling Federation (SBF), led by then-head of youth development and now president Jessie Phua, “cleaned up the lanes” about 20 years ago.

But sources told ST that gambling is still present at several of the 24 bowling centres here, some of which are less strict in policing such activities.

One source said: “With the SBF’s push to clean up the image of the sport, things have improved, but, like most vices, it is impossible to completely eliminate.

“Such activities have been around since the 1980s and back then the stakes were even higher. You could lose a car or a house, with bets in the tens of thousands which was a huge sum in those days.”

The Sunday Times team visited various bowling centres around Singapore this week, but no obvious gambling activities were seen.

However, there were clear warning signs to refrain from gambling.

At Orchid Country Club’s fun bowl on Friday night, an announcer was heard reminding participants that gambling was not allowed, to go along with signs on the tables.

But one sceptic told ST in Hokkien: “When the tree falls, the monkeys scatter.”

“After they made the news, the big players and bookies are scared to appear now, but I think they will be back in a month.”

At Orchid Bowl @ Safra Punggol, there was a sign that read: “No gambling is allowed in this bowling centre. Anyone found violating will be handed over to the authority. Thank you for your cooperation.”

A spokesman for Family Leisure Pte Ltd, which runs Orchid Bowl, said: “Orchid Bowl does not condone illegal activities of any kind, and we take a serious view of this matter. Gambling is banned at our premises and we will not hesitate to call the police should such activity occur.



Above: A man with a wad of cash dealing with a punter at Orchid Bowl @ Orchid Country Club.



Left: “Fans” watching the action, with some allegedly placing bets. PHOTOS: SHIN MIN DAILY NEWS

### BETS IN THE THOUSANDS

The hardcore gamblers can bet a few thousand on a single throw, and such big bets may be split among the bookies, who usually carry a few thousand dollars with them for cash payouts.

”

**MARK**, a social bowler who spoke on condition of anonymity, on what is happening in several bowling centres.

### CALL FOR PUBLIC VIGILANCE

Bowling continues to enjoy a healthy image but this image and the livelihood of many in the industry will be under threat if gambling is allowed to exist... The SBF encourages the public to continue to report such activities to the authorities.

”

**SINGAPORE BOWLING FEDERATION**, in a statement to The Sunday Times, on its concern about gambling in bowling centres.

“We have sought assistance and advice from the police and have since briefed all staff and strengthened our surveillance.

“This includes additional signage and announcements to warn our patrons against gambling, and security deployment during leagues and major events.”

When contacted, the police confirmed that a report was lodged and investigations are ongoing.

The SBF, keen on not letting the sport return to the “dark ages”, sent an advisory to the management of all bowling centres last week to express its concern, ST understands.

In that circular, the sport’s local governing body urged them to be more vigilant and suggested such notices be displayed prominently.

In a statement to ST, the SBF said: “In the 1990s, our president Jessie Phua, with the support of bowling centre owners and operators, took great pains to eradicate gambling and smoking in bowling centres to protect the image of the sport.

“The knock-on positive effect was so tremendous that bowling was included as a co-curricular activity in schools. Bowling continues to enjoy a healthy image but this image and the livelihood of many in the industry will be under threat if gambling is allowed to exist.

“All of us have a role to create a safe playing environment for our patrons, especially our young charges who may be training or playing recreationally in these commercial centres... The SBF encourages the

public to continue to report such activities to the authorities.”

Esther Tan, a mother of a 16-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son who just picked up bowling, hopes such measures will be effective.

The 40-year-old said: “While we have not seen it (illegal gambling) personally, I am concerned after reading the news because I would not want my kids to pick up such bad habits when they go bowling.

“Bowling should be a wholesome activity and the authorities should definitely do something about it to stop the bad influence.”

davidlee@sph.com.sg

• Additional reporting by Laura Chia and Xener Gill

### The different types of bets

According to sources, there are a few scenarios punters can bet on in bowling and the odds can range from 1-to-1 to 50-to-1. Technically, they can bet on anyone on the lanes but, typically, they pick on someone who is more proficient due to the nature of the bets.

• One pin standing: Punters can bet on any one pin to be left standing after a throw. Typically, for a right-hander, odds are offered for only the No. 10, the pin on the extreme right. For lefties, it is No. 7, the left-most pin.

• Odds may also be offered on only the No. 5, the middle, or the head pin to stand. These are rarer scenarios and the odds appreciate accordingly.

• Split conversion: Whether a bowler spares after a split.

• Strike: Punters win if the bowler makes a strike.

• Odd/even: Whether the number of pins standing after each throw is odd or even.

David Lee

### four-digit draw

Jan 19 2019

**First** ▶ 9603  
**Second** ▶ 4936  
**Third** ▶ 9016

#### STARTERS

0066 0157 0902  
1547 2081 2661  
3245 3530 3628  
4736

#### CONSOLATIONS

0958 1381 2321  
2698 2909 3300  
4942 5653 7448  
8347



Liverpool come from behind to defeat Crystal Palace



ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

YESTERDAY

Bournemouth 2 West Ham 0

Liverpool 4 Crystal Palace 3

Man United 2 Brighton 1

Newcastle 3 Cardiff 0

Southampton 2 Everton 1

Watford 0 Burnley 0

Wolves 4 Leicester 3

Arsenal v Chelsea

Late kick-off

TODAY

Huddersfield v Man City

Singtel Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, 9.30pm

Fulham v Tottenham

Ch102 & Ch227, 11.55pm

Liverpool suffered a scare as they battled to a 4-3 Premier League win over Crystal Palace, who led through Andros Townsend (34th minute). But goals by Mohamed Salah (46th) and Roberto Firmino (53rd) put Liverpool ahead, before James Tomkins (65th) restored parity. Salah (75th) and Sadio Mane (stoppage time) seemed to settle things before Max Meyer added a consolation goal.

SPYING  
COMMON  
IN EUROPE,  
SAYS  
GUARDIOLA

He believes it is the ‘culture’ in leagues outside England but insists he’ll not do it as City boss

NOT SO STRAIGHTFORWARD

It’s a little bit of a problem really because we don’t know... We will have to, immediately adapt after five or 10 minutes.

“

PEP GUARDIOLA, Manchester City manager, on how his team must be wary today against a Huddersfield side with a new coach in charge.

LONDON • Pep Guardiola has hinted that while his staff spied on opponents during his spells in charge of Barcelona and Bayern Munich, there was no chance of that occurring under his watch in England.

Leeds manager Marcelo Bielsa is being investigated by the English Football League after Derby spotted one of his scouts spying on their training session last week.

But the Manchester City boss has not lost any of his admiration for his friend Bielsa, who helped him during the early stages of his managerial career.

“My respect remains the same,” he said at a press conference ahead of their Premier League trip to relegation-threatened Huddersfield today. “I admired what he did in the past, so why should I change my opinion?”

“In other countries, everybody does that (spying). It is more difficult. It is private. But, in all the countries I have been, everybody does it.

“When we were training at Bayern, there were people in the little mountains with cameras and the opponent was watching what we did.

“It is the culture of the clubs. Not because you said, ‘You have to do it’. It is the leagues. (But) I am not going to send anyone to spy on Huddersfield.”

Not like any advantage will be gleaned even if City employ subterfuge as their opponents currently do not have a full-time manager, with David Wagner leaving by mutual consent earlier last week.

Under-23 coach Mark Hudson will take charge until a permanent appointment is made and Guardiola admitted he “did not know exactly anything” as his counterpart was an unknown quantity.

Warning his men they have to adapt as quickly as possible today, he told reporters: “It’s a little bit of a problem really because we don’t know. Of course, we have some information about what he’s done at the U-23 (level), but it’s completely different (in the league).

“Whether they will play long or short balls, whether they will go four in the back, five in the back, one striker or two strikers? High pressing or low pressing?

“We will have to immediately adapt after five or 10 minutes, the players have to understand what is going to happen with the game.”

The Spaniard also touched on additions, revealing that while City are unlikely to move for anyone in the January transfer window, the league champions will be targeting not only a central midfielder but also a left-back in the summer.

He has long spoken of City’s need for an alternative to Fernandinho, given that they have no one who possesses like-for-like qualities.

But with Benjamin Mendy – who is close to returning after being out since November – having had two serious knee injuries in 18 months, Guardiola has highlighted the position as an area of concern.

He added: “We survived well last season, this season too, but we are thinking about that. At the end of the season, we are going to look at both options.”

Leicester defender Ben Chilwell is thought to be on his shortlist.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE TIMES, LONDON

HUDDERSFIELD V MAN CITY

Singtel Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, 9.30pm

HeartOfFootball

Huddersfield’s best just not good enough



Rob Hughes

Whoever said football is a level playing field might be considered to have a funny sense of proportion around John Smith’s Stadium today.

For when Huddersfield Town, the bottom club in the EPL, kick off against the champions Manchester City, it stretches the imagination to think of them in the same league.

Huddersfield, without a manager since last Monday, without a win in 10 games, and without any reliable goal scorer, are sinking fast in the relegation mire.

City have scored 19 goals in three games, and their manager Pep Guardiola has the luxury of choice. He can start with the Argentinian Sergio Aguero, or the Brazilian Gabriel Jesus, or do as he did at the start of this season when he played them both in a 6-1 thrashing of Huddersfield.

It gets worse. Huddersfield’s most potent player, Aaron Mooy (the one they bought from City’s surplus), is out for months with medial knee ligament damage. The £11 million (\$\$19.2 million) that Huddersfield paid for Mooy is a tenth of their total squad value.

Put another way, it is also around 1 per cent of the £1 billion valuation that Guardiola can put onto the

pitch. Level playing field? No Sir, not by any measure.

Even if you could somehow include Lionel Messi (that marvel who Guardiola once coached at Barcelona and whose unprecedented numbers now stand at 641 goals and 265 assists in 788 appearances), he might not be able to rescue Huddersfield.

Because the Yorkshire club, known for good reason as The Terriers, have been playing above their station. And the man who inspired it, the German manager David Wagner, threw in the towel this week.

This, believe me, would not be out of self-interest. Wagner is the most thoughtful and most considerate of men. He has been a top-line player in Germany, a full-time teacher in his specialist subjects of biology and sports sciences. And for once when a manager and a club part out of what they call mutual agreement it is worth believing on this occasion.

Wagner is going because he has exhausted, literally and figuratively, everything he has to give. He built this dream of taking on the Premier League billionaires. He lived it with Huddersfield for three years, taking them from the bottom of the next league down to promotion and then, against even greater odds, keeping them up last season.

The struggle then required them to save their status with away games at Man City and then Chelsea. They drew both through terrier-like tenacity.

The Huddersfield owner,

Even if you could somehow include Lionel Messi (whose unprecedented numbers now stand at 641 goals and 265 assists in 788 appearances), he might not be able to rescue Huddersfield.

life-long supporter Dean Hoyle, saw the effect that Jurgen Klopp was having at Liverpool, and hired Wagner – Klopp’s best friend and former assistant at Borussia Dortmund.

When, last week, the dream ride between the Yorkshire club owner and his polite German coach ended, where do you think Hoyle might turn for a successor, a second dream-maker?

Hoyle won’t say, officially, until after today’s game against Man City. But we hear that the compensation of around £250,000 has been agreed to persuade Dortmund to release the next man from their coaching conveyor belt, the current Borussia II trainer Jan Siewert.

He is 36, a decade younger than Klopp and Wagner, and six years younger from yet another Dortmund coach, Daniel Farke, who is currently attempting to manage Norwich City to the EPL.

But when chairman Hoyle said his goodbyes to Wagner, he made a comparison to the greatest manager in the club’s history.

“Under David’s management, we took this club to the highest position it has held in almost 50 years and created memories that will last forever,” Hoyle said.

“His achievements will rightly put him up there in Huddersfield Town history, alongside great names like Herbert Chapman and Mick Buxton; legendary managers who changed the face of this club.”

Chapman coached Huddersfield in their finest hours, building the side that won the English league title three times in the 1920s. He then joined Arsenal for double his salary (£2,000 per annum) and put the Gunners on top.

In memory, Arsenal commissioned a bronze bust of Chapman to set into the Marble Hall of the old Highbury Stadium.

Today, two replicas of that bust adorn the Diamond Club entrance at Arsenal’s Emirates Stadium, and the entrance to the John Smith’s Stadium.

Now is a painful time for Wagner, but who knows he might eventually be remembered alongside the historical father of the club?

He tried, he succeeded, but against the overwhelming financial advantage of the giants, the effort drained him into submission.

Level field be darned.

stsports@sph.com.sg

Alli may spearhead Tottenham in Kane’s absence

LONDON • Mauricio Pochettino could use Dele Alli as a “false nine” to address Tottenham’s problems up front in light of striker Harry Kane’s ankle injury.

Spurs travel to Fulham today and

are expected to be without three forwards for their Premier League encounter at Craven Cottage.

Kane, who was voted England Player of the Year by fans on Friday, will be out until March, while

Son Heung-min is playing for South Korea at the Asian Cup.

Pochettino will not be able to call on his top and second-highest scorers with 14 and eight league goals this season respectively, as well as

midfielder Moussa Sissoko, who has a groin strain.

To compound matters further, forward Lucas Moura is unlikely to return from a knee problem, while back-up striker Fernando Llorente

has not started a league game since Spurs beat Swansea a year ago.

Pochettino does not want Kane’s absence to be seen as an excuse if the team do not perform today.

He said: “We have players who can cover his position. It won’t affect our approach to games.”

With Spurs unlikely to dip into the January market for a short-term fix, Pochettino has pin-pointed

midfielder Alli as having the intelligence to fill in for Kane.

“You can play Dele Alli, (Erik) Lamela. It’s not that you have to play with one specific striker,” he said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE TIMES, LONDON

FULHAM V TOTTENHAM

Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, 11.55pm



SMBC Singapore Open 2019

# FUJIMOTO IN POLE POSITION

Playing on same flight as the rhythmic Casey and Poom inspires Japanese into 1-stroke lead

Lester Wong

Having been at the mercy of the weather for the past two days, Yoshinori Fujimoto was not expecting to finish his round again at the SMBC Singapore Open yesterday. But finish he did, and with aplomb too, as the Japanese claimed a one-stroke lead at the tournament's three-quarter mark. With the sun setting on the Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong course, the world No. 180 sank a birdie putt on the 18th for a five-under 66 and a 13-under 200 total (67-67-66), putting some daylight between himself and the chasing pack going into the final round today.

"I'm glad we managed to finish before play was suspended. I'm really tired now but at the same time I'm enjoying playing with the international players," said the 29-year-old, who shared a flight with world No. 24 Paul Casey and Thailand's Poom Saksansin. "They played with good rhythm, so I had a good time watching them. Maybe that was why I was smiling all the time out there." His play gave him even more reason to smile, with the highlight of his round an eagle on the par-five seventh hole, where a splendid approach shot set up a straightforward putt on the green. "We all play golf to win but I like to enjoy myself, play good golf and put on a show for spectators too," said the mustachioed Fujimoto. "It's been a while since I last won (in 2013). My family is back in Japan supporting me. I would like to give

them some good news tomorrow." It was good news on the weather front yesterday, with play at the US\$1 million (S\$1.35 million) event unaffected by delays for the first time in the week. Half the field had returned in the morning to complete their second rounds, with Fujimoto playing 29 holes in total yesterday. Playing the extra holes seemed to have helped Thailand's Jazz Janewattananond (68-68-65) and England's Matthew Fitzpatrick (68-67-66) as well, with Jazz shooting the low round of the day. Both are one stroke adrift of Fujimoto on 201. South Korean Mun Do-yeob, Casey and Thailand's Chapchai Nirat are a further two strokes back on 203. The 23-year-old Jazz revealed a unique strategy for alleviating the pressure on himself going into the last 18 holes, which start at 7.30am

today: focus on getting one of four qualifying spots to July's The Open Championship instead of the win. The top four finishers here not already exempt will earn berths for Royal Portrush. "Yes, everybody wants to win and so do I. But there are a lot of good players out here. If you aim for the win, you put a lot of pressure on yourself," said the world No. 111. "But if you aim for the Open, which is four spots, you just have to play your game, hit some good shots. Top four is doable if you don't make any mistakes. "I learnt a lot last year (at the Open) when I made my Major debut, so it will be good to play there again."

lesterw@sph.com.sg

SMBC SINGAPORE OPEN  
Day 4: StarHub Ch201, noon

## LEADERBOARD

3RD RD (selected)
200 Yoshinori Fujimoto (Jpn) 67 67 66
201 Jazz Janewattananond (Tha) 68 68 65, Matthew Fitzpatrick (Eng) 68 67 66
203 Mun Do-yeob (Kor) 71 65 67, Paul Casey (Eng) 68 67 68, Chapchai Nirat (Tha) 67 70 66
204 Poom Saksansin (Tha) 65 70 69
206 Gunn Charoenkul (Tha) 68 71 67
207 Davis Love III (USA) 69 68 70, Prayad Marksang (Tha) 70 71 66, Shota Wada (Jpn) 66 70 71, Kim Si-hwan (USA) 70 67 70, Shaun Norris (Rsa) 69 68 70, Choi Ho-sung (Kor) 69 69 69, Prom Meesawat (Tha) 69 69 69
208 Ryo Ishikawa (Jpn) 69 66 73, Sergio Garcia (Esp) 69 68 71
210 Johnson Poh (Sgp) 71 70 69
213 Dru Love IV (USA) 73 67 73



Yoshinori Fujimoto played 29 holes in total at the Sentosa Golf Club yesterday. At the end of a long day, he was still smiling after a five-under 66 third round and a 13-under 200 total (67-67-66). PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Better safe than sorry for Chapchai

It was deja vu for Thai golfer Chapchai Nirat on the third day of the SMBC Singapore Open yesterday at the Sentosa Golf Club. He carded a five-under 66 in the third round for a 203 total to lie three strokes off Japan's Yoshinori

Fujimoto in joint-fourth. Last year, he had the same three-day score and was a stroke behind Sergio Garcia. While the Spaniard held his lead to become champion, Chapchai came undone and had a 77 to finish joint-16th.

The world No. 378 hinted that his late collapse remains on his mind going into today's final round. "I just want to have fun. I'm happy to be in a good position but I don't want to think too much about tomorrow," said the four-time Asian

Tour winner. "I have a good caddie this week. He helped me a lot." The 35-year-old said playing it safe yesterday allowed him to make his move from joint-11th. He said: "I tried not to be too aggressive. Based on my past experi-

ences (here), I knew how and when to play it safe. I knew the pins would be difficult in the third round." He sank four straight birdies to open his back nine, including a 40-footer on the par-four 10th. He might have fared better than a card of seven birdies, blotted by two bogeys, if not for lapses in concentration during his last two holes. "I expected myself to putt well on the back nine. This is a golf course that suits my game and I had fun out there today," he said.

He appears to be back in the swing of things after a wretched 2017 which saw him plummet to a career-worst 805th in the world. He recorded five top-10 finishes last year, including consecutive top-three finishes at the Indonesia Open and the Royal Cup in July. A win would complete his revival. "It's been a good start to the year so far. Hopefully more good things will come my way," he said.

Lester Wong

## A little kindness goes a long way for Lee

David Lee

Daniel Lee used to be involved in mission work in Cambodia, until he had to take care of his late mother. The 57-year-old, who runs his own interior design business, returned to volunteer work as part of the National Stadium workforce management team during the 2015 SEA Games on home soil. But it was during the Asean Para Games later that year where he discovered his calling. Since 2016, he has volunteered with the Singapore wheelchair rugby team and has even attended a wheelchair rugby coaching course. He frequently takes time off work to accompany the team for overseas competitions, on top of thrice-a-week training sessions. For his efforts, Lee was one of six winners at the inaugural SportCares Awards, presented by President Halimah Yacob at the Istana yesterday. He said: "I just want to see happiness in people, especially the less

fortunate. "Little by little, we can help and if we can give back, we should do it." The SportCares Awards are established to honour individuals, corporates, ground-up movements, non-profit organisations and educational institutions that have achieved excellence in empowering communities, especially the under-served and the vulnerable, through sports. There were three categories; Lee was one of three recipients, with football coaches Chris Lim and Isa Haleem, of the Coaching Inspiration Award. The other two categories were Sporting Inspiration Award and Corporate Giving Inspiration Award. Congratulating the award winners and nominees, President Halimah said: "Using athletics, basketball, football, outdoor adventure, rugby, sailing, swimming and tennis as key channels for social development through sport, SportCares today mentors close to 1,000 children and youths. They have, in turn, collectively contributed more



than 20,000 hours of volunteerism in the community. "It is timely for us to acknowledge and recognise the contributions of individuals and organisations who have supported SportCares in their initiatives."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

Wheelchair rugby coach Daniel Lee (centre) receives his Coaching Inspiration Award from President Halimah Yacob and Sport Singapore chief executive Lim Teck Yin at the SportCares Awards yesterday. PHOTO: SPORT SINGAPORE

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Sun, 20 Jan 2019				
A League	Melbourne Vict	Wellington	2.00pm	LW
A League	Central Coast	Brisbane Roar	4.00pm	LW
Asian Cup	Jordan	Vietnam	7.00pm	LW / SB
Spanish League	Real Betis	Girona	7.00pm	LW / SB
English Premier	Huddersfield	Manchester City	9.30pm	LW / SB
Dutch League	Emmen	PSV	9.30pm	LW / SB
Asian Cup	Thailand	China PR	10.00pm	LW / SB
German League	Nuremberg	Hertha Berlin	10.30pm	LW / SB
Spanish League	Villarreal	Athletic Bilbao	11.15pm	LW / SB
Dutch League	Ajax	Heerenveen	11.45pm	LW / SB
Mon, 21 Jan 2019				
English Premier	Fulham	Tottenham	12.00am	LW / SB
Asian Cup	Iran	Oman	1.00am	LW / SB
German League	Schalke 04	Wolfsburg	1.00am	LW / SB
Spanish League	Vallecano	Sociedad	1.30am	LW / SB
Spanish League	Barcelona	Leganes	3.45am	LW

Visit [singaporepools.com](http://singaporepools.com) for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

LOTTERY	
<b>TOTO</b>	Mon, 21 Jan 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3442/2019
Group 1 Prize	<b>\$2,400,000</b> est.
Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994	

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.  
LW: LiveWire (MBS) & LiveWire (RWS) (21 years and above)  
LW: LiveWire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)  
SB: SportsBuzzer (21 years and above)  
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6786 6688 for more details.

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Australian Open 2019

# THE NO.1 VERSUS THE BEST

Super-motivated Halep sets up showdown with Williams by ousting her sister Venus

MELBOURNE • A fourth-round collision tomorrow that will rip the Australian Open wide apart brings world No. 1 Simona Halep and Serena Williams, arguably the best player in the history of women's tennis, together for the ninth time.

The American has an 8-2 grip on that rivalry, but the Romanian comes into the match after beating her sister, Venus, 6-2, 6-3 in convincing fashion yesterday.

The 27-year-old Halep, lifted after breaking through at Roland Garros last summer following years of near-misses in the Majors, had dropped a tie-break set in both her previous rounds.

But she found the right gears against Venus, who admitted her opponent "played pretty flawless tennis today". She added: "Only 12 errors. Unfortunately, I had almost three times as many."

The French Open champion agreed she had played her "best match here this year" as she had been "super motivated today".

Perhaps the reason for her intensity was down to an eagerness to set up a match worthy of a Melbourne Park final.

Looking ahead to the clash with the 23-time Grand Slam winner,

who is looking to equal the all-time record of Margaret Court, Halep said she had "nothing to lose".

Halep, who conceded she was an underdog against Serena despite topping the world rankings since October 2017, said: "I (am) playing against a great champion."

"I beat her only once in my life, so I cannot say much about this match. It's going to (be) a bigger challenge but I'm ready to face it."

"It's always great to play against Serena because every time I have to learn something from the match. Definitely, it's the toughest draw I've had."

"In my opinion, to be No. 1 in the world and to be the best player in the world, it's a little bit different."

"In this moment, I'm No. 1 in the world, so I will take that. I feel like I have been there many months, many weeks."

"But, for sure, she's the best player in the world because she won so many Grand Slams. She's been a lot on No. 1. I cannot compare my results to her."

"But in this moment, I'm confident that I'm in this position, and I'm positive about it."

Also on their side of the draw is Serena's conqueror in the US Open

final, Naomi Osaka, who had to come from a set and 2-4 down to get past the quirky genius of Chinese Taipei's Hsieh Su-wei 5-7, 6-4, 6-1.

The world No. 4 struggled against her 27th-ranked opponent's unorthodox strokeplay, comprising a dizzying mix of drop shots and slices, which left the Japanese "never (being able to) really tell where she's going to put the ball".

Osaka told reporters: "I walked into the match knowing that she was going to do a lot of strange things. It's very, very hard to have a rally with her."

Latvia's Anastasija Sevastova will be Osaka's next opponent while the 2017 US Open finalist Madison Keys is also through after upsetting Belgian Elise Mertens 6-3, 6-2.

The American takes on Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, who prevailed 4-6, 6-4, 7-5 over unseeded Zhang Shuai of China in two hours and 55 minutes, the longest match in the women's championship so far.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS, THE GUARDIAN

AUSTRALIAN OPEN  
Day 7: Singtel TV Ch114/115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 2pm



Serena Williams consoling Dayana Yastremska after beating the Ukrainian 6-2, 6-1 in the third round yesterday. Williams will meet world No. 1 Simona Halep for the ninth time tomorrow. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

SportingLife

## Generations grapple as young heroes look to topple old guard



Rohit Brijnath

Assistant Sports Editor  
In Melbourne

Dayana Yastremska was crying in the sun and Serena Williams kind of liked it. Tears don't just reflect distress but also desire. "It shows she wasn't just there to play a good match," said Serena, "she was there to win... it's good to see that attitude".

Serena beat Yastremska 6-2, 6-1, hugged her, consoled her, told her "you were amazing" and sent her on her way. Lesson administered. Class over. Yastremska is 18, Serena is 37. This was a schooling.

A match later on Rod Laver Arena, the age gap was slighter. Only 12 years – and a mere 14 Grand Slam titles – between Novak Djokovic, 31, and Denis Shapovalov, 19. The rising young Canadian, the No. 25 seed, likes video games, the legendary Serb is probably in them.

Under a blue sky the blond Shapovalov walked into his media conference, the first question was, "How good is Djokovic?" He smiled and said: "He's good. I think he's No. 1 good."

If you're wondering what's going

on at this Open, here's what it is: tennis is in the midst of a mighty scuffle between generations. The kids who grew up on Rafa and Rog now want to respectfully take their scalp but these old heroes are like those cement statues. Just hard to budge.

Firstly, of course, it's best not to keep harping on their age. When Jim Courier used a polite word yesterday to describe a person of Djokovic's experience, the Serb laughed and said: "Did you just call me a veteran?"

Secondly, these old guys, they're just meaner at the Slams, they simply don't wish to give way. The last guys who managed to get a membership card were Stan Wawrinka, who won his first Slam at 28, and Marin Cilic, who got his only one at 25.

Somehow, you think, Alexander Zverev, 21, and Stefanos Tsitsipas, 20, are not going to wait that long. They want it now, this year, even this Open.

This generational grapple is terrific because it makes you want to pick sides. If you're older maybe you lean towards Federer, tennis' village chief, who says he plays for his kids. If you're a younger person maybe you think it's time for these fossils to file for their pensions.

Either way the gap is so wide occasionally it makes you giggle.

When Ben Rothenberg of the New York Times asked young WTA star Amanda Anisimova, 17, about her town's famous resident, she asked: "Wait – Bruce who? Is he, like, old?" Maybe Springsteen will read the story and just shake his head.

This tussle is fun and it's tense, it is raised at press conferences and debated on court, it is about age-groups who admire each other but don't quite succumb to awe.

When Switzerland recently beat Germany again at the Hopman Cup, Zverev said: "We're all tired of you guys already, but what can we do? Especially you (pointing at Federer). I mean, you're 30-whatever. Why? Just why?"

It was said in jest, Federer laughed and it's a struggle underpinned by respect. The other night Nadal was asked if the older guys were frustrating the younger guys by refusing to yield and he said: "No, no, no. Just we love this

If you're wondering what's going on at this Open, here's what it is: tennis is in the midst of a mighty scuffle between generations. The kids who grew up on Rafa and Rog now want to respectfully take their scalp but these old heroes are like those cement statues. Just hard to budge.

sport and we want to keep playing. Will be the day that will not happen. The new generation is coming hard."

But the harder they come, the harder the old guys work. If they inspire the young guys, they draw motivation from them. They're happy to give young folk a compliment but not a single free point. Nadal ran so hard the other day that Alex de Minaur, 19, said: "Obviously I would love to be as physically fit as Rafa."

The old guys keep playing because they're smart and prepared. Yesterday, Leander Paes, the 45-year-old Indian who is still playing doubles, spoke about the recovery, fitness, yoga and diet of the top guys and glowingly described Djokovic as "a scientist in an athletic world". Maybe if we all drank celery juice like him we'd enhance our concentration.

As Shapovalov said about the Serb: "He doesn't give you anything, to be honest. You have to be there the whole match, every point. If you have any dips, he's going to take advantage of it. ... I felt that a little bit. Definitely mentally a little bit tired right now. Kind of want to take a nap."

The old guys will see who they used to be in the young guys. The young guys will see what they want to be in the old guys. A brilliant revolution is brewing on various courts and it carries on today as Federer, 37, meets Tsitsipas, 20.

It will be just another day for Federer. Rod Laver Arena, night match, an adoring crowd and two rivals in front of him. A charming Greek who he laughed "could be my son" and that old rogue Father Time.

rohitb@sph.com.sg

## Tomic says Hewitt lied over threats

MELBOURNE • Bernard Tomic has called Lleyton Hewitt a "liar", after the Australian Davis Cup captain claimed he had been blackmailed and physically threatened by the firebrand.

The explosive allegations made by Hewitt on Thursday followed an ugly war of words in which Tomic claimed the two-time Grand Slam champion had ruined the national system and "no one likes him any more".

Hewitt responded by calling Tomic "a clown", while alleging he tried to coerce him by demanding wildcards and threatening to sit out of Cup matches.

Tomic responded, telling the Herald Sun on Friday he had "never threatened his family", adding: "Nice, Lleyton. To think how low of a person you actually are. (It's) why the Australian public never liked you."

"I got nothing to do with your family and I don't care what's wrong with you."

And yesterday, Tomic's father John said he planned legal action against Hewitt over an incident that supposedly occurred when his son was a Cup debutant, leaving Tomic "shocked".

He told the Sydney Morning Herald Hewitt came to his son's hotel room during a tie against Chinese Taipei in March 2010 and pressured him to inform who from Tennis Australia (TA) was telling him what to say publicly.

Hewitt had then been highly critical of TA during a period of turmoil for TA. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## SportsWorld

Lowry wins by one shot in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI • Ireland's Shane Lowry won a see-saw battle with South African Richard Sterne, needing a birdie on the last hole to win the US\$7 million (\$\$9.5 million) Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship yesterday.

Lowry held his nerve to close with a one-under 71 and a 18-under 270 total for a one-shot win over Sterne, who shot a final round of 69, while Dutchman Joost Luiten finished third on 15-under 273 after a 65.

It was Lowry's first win since the World Golf Championship-Bridgestone Invitational in August 2015 and he is now expected to rise 35 places to world No. 40. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Late birdie run keeps Mickelson ahead

LOS ANGELES • Phil Mickelson birdied four of his last five holes on Friday to remain in front after two rounds of the Desert Classic in southern California.

Mickelson, who came up a shot shy of a 59 in his first round played at La Quinta Country Club, carded a four-under 68 at the Nicklaus Tournament Course to move to 16-under 128, two strokes ahead of Australian Curtis Luck (66).

The tournament is played out over three courses during a four-day stretch. REUTERS

Henderson leads with Ariya two shots back

MIAMI • Canada's Brooke Henderson shot a four-under 67 on Friday to grab a two-stroke lead after the second round of the LPGA's season-opening Tournament of Champions.

Ninth-ranked Henderson closed a bogey-free round with seven pars in a row to stand on 10-under 132 after 36 holes at Four Seasons Golf and Sports Club in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

World No. 1 Ariya Jutanugarn was hot on her heels after firing a second consecutive 67 to share second on 134 alongside New Zealand's 14th-ranked Lydia Ko (68) and South Korea's 32nd-ranked Ji Eun-hee (69). AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



# WARRIORS' ULTIMATE 'SUPERTEAM' ON FIRE

Cousins debuts with 14 pts to add another dimension to the defending champs

LOS ANGELES • Fans of the Golden State Warriors had waited four months to see the ultimate “Super-team” on court.

For DeMarcus Cousins, the wait had been even longer, after spending a year on the sidelines since tearing his Achilles tendon while at the New Orleans Pelicans.

Coach Steve Kerr promised he would align all his All-Stars and the centre did not disappoint on his highly anticipated debut, displaying all the hallmarks of a classic Cousins performance – from a monster dunk to running the floor and, of course, foul trouble.

Joking after he fouled out of their 112-94 win at the Los Angeles Clippers after 15 minutes of game time, he told CBS Sports: “(The referee) was hating on me tonight, bro. I need to get used to this new NBA.”

Yet it is not the 28-year-old who needs time to get up to speed, but rather the other National Basketball Association contenders; they have to deal with the new normal – that the Warriors’ perimeter threats are even more pronounced.

His 48 per cent shooting from the post in 2017-18 season was the fifth-best mark among players with at least 200 post possessions and “Boogie” did not miss a step for his new team, going five-of-11 from the field, including three-of-four from beyond the arc for 14 points.

The Warriors led the Clippers a merry dance, inflicting their fifth straight loss, with Stephen Curry on 28 points and Kevin Durant adding 24 to surpass NBA great Clyde Drexler to sit 31st on the all-time scoring list.

But the night was all about Cousins and the Warriors were delighted for him, with Curry and Klay Thompson pouring water over his head in the post-game celebrations.

Admitting it was “one of the best days of my life”, he told reporters: “Felt like a kid on Christmas. It’s been a long journey.

“It felt great to be out there. A lot of ups and downs, a lot of dark days, a lot of good days, but this is where my love and passion is, so I’m just happy to be out here on the floor and out here with my teammates.”

The visiting supporters at the Staples Centre also appreciated the hustle he brought, giving him a standing ovation when he fouled out with six fouls and rising to their feet when he announced his return by throwing down for the two-time



Golden State Warriors centre DeMarcus Cousins dunks the ball in the first half of the NBA game against the Los Angeles Clippers at the Staples Centre. Cousins’ presence helped his new team win 112-94. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

defending champions’ first points of the game.

Laughing off the reception, Cousins said: “Man, probably the fakest love I’ve received in my life. I’m just going to keep it a million.

“I’m just glad to know that I can still dunk. It felt good. I never in a

million years thought that would be my first basket playing ball again.”

“I honestly don’t see how guys like Steph and Klay do it on the daily, where there are cameras around them all day. I don’t like it, at all. So hopefully, this is the last

day of this.”

But if Cousins is expecting the focus to shift after he gets used to the team, Durant is not, with his ability to “keep people on us at the three-point line”. The rest of the league have been duly warned. REUTERS, WASHINGTON POST

## F1 reports rise in TV, digital audiences

LONDON • Formula One saw a rise in worldwide audience figures across TV and digital platforms last year, the Liberty Media-owned motor sport reported on Friday.

It said Brazil, China and the United States represented the top three markets in TV reach, largely a consequence of new or revised broadcast deals in those countries.

The global cumulative TV audience was put at 1.758 billion, of which 1.59 billion were in the top-20 markets – a rise of 3 per cent compared to 2017 and the second consecutive year of growth.

The number of “unique viewers”, now defined by the industry standard of those who watched at least three consecutive minutes, rose 10

per cent to 490.2 million.

“In today’s world, just having a flat TV number is a strong performance,” the sport’s global research director Matt Roberts told Reuters. “We’re really pleased that we’ve seen growth for the second year in a row after many years of decline for the longer-term trend.”

The showcase Monaco Grand Prix in May returned the highest cumulative audience of the season, showing a rise of 10 per cent year-on-year with 110 million viewers.

Bahrain, France, Austria, Britain, Italy and Mexico also had more than 90 million viewers.

France returned to the calendar last season after a 10-year absence, with the race at Le Castellet’s Paul

Ricard circuit broadcast free-to-air on the TF1 channel.

The audience growth in China, a key strategic target, reflected the sport returning to state network CCTV.

“China is now the second-largest market and the US the third largest. They weren’t even in the top five before,” F1’s commercial managing director Sean Bratches told Reuters. “We have a long-term vision, we’re focusing on it and I think the numbers are reflective of where we are going.”

Followers across the F1’s own social media platforms also showed a 53.7 per cent rise last year. Previous commercial supremo Bernie Ecclestone demonstrated little in-

terest in using social media to attract a younger demographic.

Liberty, who took control at the start of 2017, has given the 10 teams more freedom to post videos and launched a TV subscription streaming service last year.

F1 added that its fan base had grown by three million to 506 million, with 205 million under the age of 35 and almost two-thirds were 45 or younger.

Of the new fans acquired in the last two years, 61 per cent were under 35 and 36 per cent under 25, according to market research company Ipsos.

The average viewer age of 40 was also in line with other major global sports and leagues. REUTERS

### Next 48 Hours

#### TODAY

##### BASKETBALL

ABL Saigon Heat v Westports Malaysia Dragons (6pm), CLS Knights v Singapore Slingers (8pm) – StarHub Ch202, Alab Pilipinas v Mono Vampire (Ch201, 8pm).

##### FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Last 16: Jordan v Vietnam (6.50pm), Thailand v China (9.50pm), Iran v Oman (tomorrow, 12.50am) – Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209).

##### English Premier League

Huddersfield v Man City (9.30pm), Fulham v Tottenham (11.55pm) – Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227.

##### Spanish LaLiga

Betis v Girona (6.55pm), Villarreal v Bilbao (11.10pm), Rayo v Sociedad (tomorrow, 1.25am), Barcelona v Leganes (tomorrow, 3.40am) – StarHub Ch213.

##### GOLF

Asian Tour SMBC Singapore Open: Day 4 (StarHub Ch201, noon). Serapong Course, Sentosa Golf Club, 7.30am.

LPGA Tour Tournament of Champions: Day 4 (Singtel TV Ch116 & StarHub Ch210, tomorrow, 3am).

##### MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

UFC Fight Night Cejudo v Dillashaw (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 11am).

##### TENNIS

Australian Open Day 7 (Singtel TV Ch114/115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 2pm).

#### TOMORROW

##### FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Last 16: Japan v Saudi Arabia (6.50pm), Australia v Uzbekistan (9.50pm), UAE v Kyrgyzstan (Tuesday, 12.50am) – Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209. Spanish LaLiga Eibar v Espanyol (StarHub Ch213, Tuesday, 3.55am).

##### TENNIS

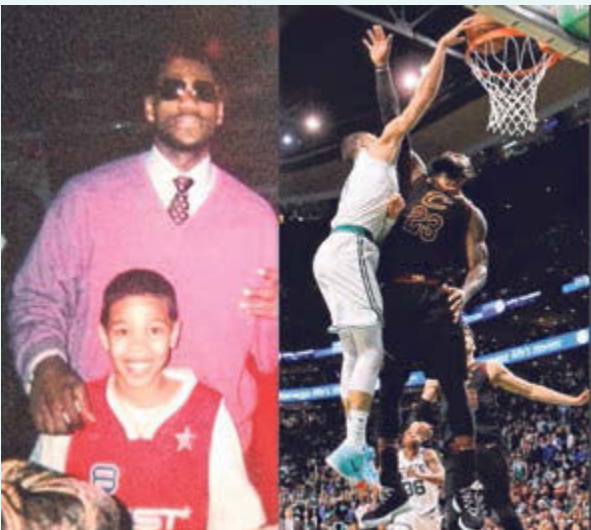
Australian Open Day 8 (Singtel TV Ch114/115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm).

## Weekly tweetbits



#### MEME-ORABLE #1

The #10yearchallenge meme went viral this week, with millions posting side-by-side photos of themselves 10 years apart. Some like Swiss Davis Cup winner Belinda Bencic showed the progress she has made, from Roger Federer’s young excitable fan to the Swiss’ young excitable doubles partner.



#### MEME-ORABLE #2

Boston Celtics shared how Jayson Tatum has grown and soared leaps and bounds between his two meetings with LeBron James.



#### MEME-ORABLE #3

Lions defender Madhu Mohana showed his followers the longevity of hairdos.



#### MEME-ORABLE #4

The US Ryder Cup team noted how Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth “grow up so fast”, but attracted comments about their hairlines receding even faster.



#### HOT SHOT

Lionel Messi and sons Mateo (top) and Thiago painting a picture of domestic bliss with his dog Hulk.

PHOTOS: TWITTER/BELINDABENCIC, INSTAGRAM/CELTICS, MADHUMACINTOSH, RYDERCUPUSA, LEOMESSI



Fitness



It is not the time spent in the gym that is important. A couple of minutes of gradual exercise may just be the first step to a successful fitness journey ahead. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

# IT'S TIME TO GET FIT

Making time for exercise can be difficult because of work, family commitments or cost. Here's how to squeeze it in, whatever your schedule.

## 20sec

"Some people think if they can't fit in a 60-minute gym routine, there's no point," says Steve Kamb, a fitness instructor and the founder of training website NerdFitness. But, for many people, it takes a lot of courage just to get through the door to go for that first run. Giving yourself 20 seconds to be brave is a great stepping stone. Use it to search for a workout plan online, or even just to walk into the gym and straight back out again, suggests Kamb. "It doesn't matter if you finish the task just yet. Sometimes getting into the gym in the first place is the victory."

## 30sec

Planking engages a number of muscles in the shoulders, back and stomach. Achieving a non-stop 30-second plank is harder than it looks, but planking helps to build a stronger core and improve posture and even flexibility. Muscle burns more calories than fat, so planking can help you to burn more calories even when you are not working out.

## 1min

Sprinting for as little as a minute each day can reduce body fat, build muscle and increase the rate at which your body burns calories while resting. Marathon runners regularly incorporate short bursts of sprinting into training because it drastically improves speed and cardiovascular fitness so that people can exercise longer. Sprints should be broken into 20-second bursts, so that you are working flat out. It is also one of the best abdominal workouts you can do – raising your leg at the 45-degree angle required for a proper sprint is equivalent to doing a crunch, and sprinters repeat this movement about 60 times in a 100m sprint.

## 3min

If your goal is to one day do a pull-up, starting with your grip strength could be an idea, because it is what determines if you fall off the bar. "There's nothing to stop you from picking up dumbbells and going for a walk," says Kamb. He suggests carrying them like suitcases at your side, an exercise known as "the farmer's walk". Each week, your grip strength will get a little better.

## 4min

A four-minute workout could help you to silence the voice in your head that says: "I don't want to workout." Tabata workouts are made up of 20-second intervals of intense exercise followed by 10 seconds of rest, repeated eight times, totalling four minutes. "Often, when people miss one workout, they feel they've lost all their gains. Tabata keeps up momentum and will sustain your muscle growth even when you can't make it to the gym," says Kamb.

## 5min

Get ready for tomorrow's workout tonight. "Put your alarm clock against the other side of the room, a glass of water by your bed, sleep in your gym kit and put your shoes by your bed," says Kamb. His reasoning? Everyone wants to be as lazy as possible when it comes to exercising – if you are already in your workout clothes when you wake up, you have eliminated a major hurdle. Take the stairs – it is great for you. Research shows that stair-climbing improves cardiovascular health and fitness, reduces "bad" cholesterol and can result in moderate

weight loss. "You are raising your weight against gravity. Even going slowly, it's as intense as jogging," says Dr Frank Eves, a senior research fellow in sport, exercise and rehabilitation sciences at the University of Birmingham. "Climbing four flights of stairs will get your heart rate working at up to 80 per cent of its maximum capacity. When you're feeling breathless, it's because your muscles just got a little bit fitter." But make sure you walk up – not down. "Climbing stairs is two to three times more strenuous (than walking down)," adds Eves.

## 30min

Get off the bus or train a stop early and walk home. Researchers from Sheffield Hallam University looked into the benefits of walking for 30 minutes a day in three 10-minute bursts, compared with people fitting in the often recommended 10,000 steps a day. The former fared better. The researchers put this down to the intensity of the walks – so make sure your walk home is a brisk one.

## 45min

"Low-intensity steady state" cardio exercise (Liss) is essentially the opposite of high-intensity interval training (Hiit). It has cardiovascular benefits, as well as increasing and strengthening the legs. The advantage over Hiit is that you can do it for longer.

## 1hr

Avoid getting hungry and you stand a better chance of eating more healthily. Health is as much about what you put in your mouth as it is how you move. Batch-cook your lunches for the coming week if you want to get ahead – when you are not hungry or rushed, you will make healthier choices. THE GUARDIAN

## HotBods

Text and pictures by Kua Chee Siong



Rahul Pratap Singh, 25  
Army regular

Height: 1.63m Weight: 57kg

**Exercise regimen:** I work out four or five times a week. In the gym, I focus on individual muscles and do shoulder presses, lat pull-downs, bench presses and weighted core exercises. When I am unable to go to the gym, I run 5km and do pull-ups, push-ups, and core exercises. I firmly believe discipline, dedication and consistency are the most important elements in achieving your fitness goals.

**Diet:** I eat more lean-protein food like eggs, fish, soya and broccoli. I reduce my carb intake to a minimum, and drink lots of water to keep hydrated. I eat vegetables for nutrients and antioxidants. As the age-old saying goes: "You are what you eat". So eat healthy to stay healthy.



Jinitha Babe Mohan, 23  
Flight attendant

Height: 1.65m Weight: 55kg

**Exercise regimen:** I frequent the gym and I usually start with fully inclined uphill walks for 20 minutes and end with a sprint. Bicep curls, cable tricep push-downs, barbell back squats, kettlebell torso twists are also on my list. On days when the gym is not available, I would do a mix of crunches, squats, Russian twists, mountain climbers, Commando, heel taps and planking.

**Diet:** Moderation is always key, hence I avoid overeating and save my cheat days for special occasions. I enjoy snacking on dark chocolate and fruits to satisfy my sweet-tooth craving. I love to cook and always try to incorporate more greens, healthy carbs and go pescatarian (a diet which includes fish and seafood instead of a vegetarian diet).

**SCAN AND WATCH**  
Hot bods videos and more:  
[instagram.com/straits\\_times](https://www.instagram.com/straits_times)





# Insight



**Invest**  
Giving the people  
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B16

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## WAR ON SUGAR

Singapore has joined others in waging war on sugar to combat diabetes, and could follow suit in imposing taxes and curbs on the sale of sugary drinks. Insight looks at the issue. **B4-7**



### HAN FOOK KWANG

Our capacity to appreciate beauty is what makes us human **B2**



### LUNCH WITH SUMIKO

Sim Wong Hoo is back and still the maverick **B3**



### KISHORE MAHBUBANI

Rajaratnam, my mentor, my inspiration **B8&9**



### RAVI VELLOOR

What goes around that comes around is giving **B9**

PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO, KEVIN LIM, ST FILE DESIGN: CHNG CHOON HIONG

## I toured the home of master potter Iskandar Jalil.

Toh Wen Li  
Journalist  
The Straits Times



Journalism goes beyond the 24-hour news cycle of current affairs. I have journeyed through the homes of artists and discovered the muse of Singapore's greatest creative minds. As a journalist, you never know what to expect at work. If you're inspired by the spirit of discovery, come take the path less travelled.



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The Sunday Times says

# Please, don't give the arts a pass

In his maiden speech in Parliament, Nominated Member of Parliament Terence Ho mooted the idea of a “Culture Pass” with credits for Singaporeans to buy tickets for arts and cultural events. The idea is a good one. A model exists in the form of ActiveSG dollars. In the latter scheme, \$100 is available for all Singaporeans and permanent residents to use at public pools and sports facilities.

But sports facilities are relatively inexpensive to access, ranging from \$1 for public pools to \$3.50 for an hour on a badminton court. Arts events are usually priced higher, with tickets to black box productions starting at \$20 and bigger productions often charging upwards of \$100.

But a Culture Pass could be used to kill two birds with one stone. One of the most urgent issues facing the arts community here is declining attendances and ticket sales. According to the National Arts Council, ticketed attendance declined by 12 per cent from 2.06 million in 2012 to 1.18 million in 2016, with an even more worrying 38 per cent fall in ticket sales from \$144.7 million to \$89.38 million. Yet, according to the Population Survey On The Arts 2017, 54 per cent of Singaporeans attended at least one arts event in 2017, up from 40 per cent in 2013.

The numbers suggest that Singaporeans are attending the increasing number of free arts events, but are unwilling to pay for ticketed ones. A Culture Pass could provide a bridge for these Singaporeans. If free events can be priced minimally and the Culture Pass used to offset the costs, this could help educate Singaporeans about the need to pay for the arts. The experience of the Singapore Writers Festival, which introduced a \$15 ticket in 2011 and increased it twice to the current \$25 charge, proves that Singaporeans can be persuaded to pay for arts events. A Culture Pass could be the key to finding an audience for arts groups and educating it to become a paying audience.

Sunset in the Pacific Ocean. Every sunrise and sunset is different and many are simply breathtaking, the writer says. The clouds in the sky, the reflection from the sea, the way the wind blows and the shifting position of the ship combine to stunning effect. ST PHOTOS: HAN FOOK KWANG



ThinkingAloud

# What is beauty? I went round the world to find out

A 3-month-long journey reveals how much there is to discover about the outside world



Han Fook Kwang

Editor-at-Large

I am back home after travelling 49,000km round the world on a ship to 21 countries over 98 days.

The Peace Boat, a Japanese-run vessel to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the world, set off from Yokohama in September, sailed the three great oceans, through the Suez and Panama canals and countless seas in between.

We visited places I had only read about, meeting people whose existence I knew nothing of.

My travels made me realise how ignorant I was about the world, despite the digital connection of

modern life linking us to everything and everywhere.

In fact, I have come to the conclusion that the more we rely on our usual sources of information, the narrower our view of the outside world.

That's because when you can choose to read what you want among the millions of choices available at your fingertips, you become so overwhelmed, you invariably gravitate towards the familiar.

The wider the choices, the more constricted the vision – it is the mind's protective response to overload.

But on my global voyage, away from the 24-hour news cycle, out of reach of social media, in the middle of an unending ocean, one is suddenly confronted with only the physical reality before you.

There is no other choice, and what a wondrous revelation it turned out to be.

The first thing that struck me as I sat on the open deck of the ship with nothing but water around was how improbable sea travel is.

The Earth spins on its axis at 1,600kmh, while simultaneously going round the Sun at 107,000kmh. Everything is moving at speed, yet the ocean clings to Mother Earth like a suckling child in tight embrace, providing safe refuge for our ship.

I know the scientific explanation called gravity that prevents all that water from flying off into space.

But it isn't easy to wrap one's



The Cocos Island off Costa Rica, with native birds in the foreground. During the voyage, the writer met people whose lives may appear simpler than those in the city but they are closer to what the natural world offers and make the most of it.

head around these technicalities, especially when there is even more to ponder.

Out at sea, you become acutely aware how fragile the ship is amid the uncertain elements.

One minute it is all calm, and, suddenly, the weather changes, the waves climb, and the ship rolls and pitches.

There were rough days when passengers became seasick. But most times, it was as fair as you could hope for.

Question: Why is the sea so relatively calm and hospitable, enabling people over the millennia to travel great distances, to trade, to explore and sometimes to raid

and plunder?

The answer has to do with the unique set of circumstances that made this planet what it is: Every conceivable coincidence coming together almost perfectly, to create the conditions necessary for life to flourish, and all the countless things we take for granted, including sea travel.

Did all this occur out of a grand design from an omnipotent creator (I believe so), or was it the result of a random cosmological accident?

You can't run away from this question out at sea when the world confronts you so nakedly.

The second thing that struck me was how beautiful that world is.

Every sunrise and sunset is different and many are simply breathtaking. The clouds in the sky, the reflection from the sea, the way the wind blows and the shifting position of the ship combine to stunning effect.

I saw double rainbows with ends that dip into the sea so close you could almost touch them.

I saw birds closer than I've ever seen, flying alongside the ship for miles, as if in tandem formation.

Suddenly one would break off, dive into the sea, reappearing seconds later, soaring out of the water, with a catch in its beak.

The beauty of the natural world beckons everywhere: flying fishes

by the dozens, flipping dolphins, and mysterious turtles appearing from nowhere.

But here is the most beautiful fact of life: our capacity to appreciate beauty.

What makes us able to do so, to be moved by it, and to be able to contemplate what it means?

Where does it come from, this idea of the beautiful? It can't be from the mind alone. The heart? Our soul?

It does not matter what you call it. Only understand it is what makes us human.

To live fully, make time to seek out the beautiful, and be alive to its possibilities.

The third thing that struck me is an obvious point: how people live so differently, shaped by their history, geography and culture.

In many places, what and how they work have not changed greatly over the years, especially in farming and fishing.

Their lives may appear simpler than those in the city but they are closer to what the natural world offers and make the most of it.

Most of all, I found that the human spirit is alive all over the world, making people everywhere live fully, overcoming the odds and braving the elements: fishermen in the Maldives who still rely on line fishing (no nets!), farmers in Sicily working on rolling hills, and Icelanders making use of geothermal energy to heat their freezing homes.

You will never encounter this in Singapore – we were on a public bus in Honolulu when the driver stopped by the road, jumped out of his seat onto the pavement, then hopped back in, yelling cheerfully: Everyone get out of the bus and take a look, there is a turtle trying to cross the road!

Startled, we did as we were told. The sight of a giant reptile in a busy street crawling nonchalantly by was something to behold.

But I was more amazed by the bus driver and his spirited attitude to work. He had as much time as the crawling turtle. It was a beautiful sight.

When you see how differently people behave elsewhere, you appreciate the diversity of humankind and acknowledge more readily how limited your own experience is, no matter how wealthy a society you live in.

On a global voyage, this feeling is heightened as you move across countries and continents in quick succession: Dublin, Iceland, New York, Havana, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, Guatemala, Mexico and Hawaii in one go felt as much like time travel as space.

Back home, among more familiar surroundings, I am struck by one post-voyage thought.

There is a frantic race among scientists to make better machines using artificial intelligence, capable of learning by themselves, like humans.

The goal it seems is to make machines more human.

Meanwhile, humans equip themselves with the latest technology so they can do things faster, more productively and competitively.

Humans want to work like machines.

Will the two converge one day – machines becoming more human and humans becoming more like machines?

I hope not.

But if that day ever comes, I hope the two will meet somewhere in the rolling hills of Sicily or the mountains of Peru or out at sea in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Happy New Year!

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• The writer is also a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University.



LunchWithSumiko

# Chaotic thoughts from a maverick

Creative’s Sim Wong Hoo is back, and his Super X-Fi audio technology has been slaying the naysayers



Sumiko Tan

Executive Editor

At 63, Sim Wong Hoo is looking better than ever before.

He’s slimmer and fitter than when he was in his 40s and the poster boy of Singapore’s tech scene. He still has a full head of hair with just a few streaks of grey, and his stride is purposeful.

How have you been able to keep looking young, I ask the founder, chairman and CEO of Creative Technology.

He laughs and says: “You want to know the secret?”

I nod. What’s the secret?

“You want to know the secret?” he teases again.

Yes, what’s the secret, I say.

“Don’t get married.”

He chortles and is clearly delighted he has shocked me with his answer.

I laugh and take it as a cue to probe further into the private life of Singapore’s most famous bachelor businessman.

For years, there had been rumours he had dated a certain Chinese-language TV newscaster. I ask if there’s any truth to that story.

“Goodness,” he says. Are people still saying that, he asks.

I tell him it’s an unsolved mystery.

“Even now?”

Well, her face and name pop up when your name is googled.

“Google – will be there forever lah,” he says. “The whole world knows who Sim Wong Hoo’s girlfriend is except me.”

So you’ve had girlfriends then? He says he wants to “protect the innocent” but “of course I’ve had girlfriends”. The newscaster wasn’t one of them though.

He shares how, at the peak of the gossip, even his siblings quizzed him about it. They surrounded him at a weekend gathering and told him: “We want a confession.”

He protested he had never heard of the newscaster, much less met her. “Still never met her,” he adds. “I don’t know how the thing started.”

Truth is, he is still happily single and lives alone.

But he has two big loves in his life right now, which are probably what is keeping him youthful.

One is running. He discovered it in 2007 and has since done more than 50 marathons, including a dozen ultramarathons.

Our lunch in December takes place soon after the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon (his 11th) which he completed in just under seven hours – “it was very hot and I was not trained”.

He regards the StanChart race as training for the Hong Kong 100, a 103km run that kicked off yesterday and which racers must complete in 30 hours. That, in turn, will be his training for the 100km TransLantau in March, which is “more turuk”.

He’s in fact wearing a TransLantau 2017 finisher jersey at our lunch, paired with running pants and Altra sneakers.

Running has trimmed his weight from 84kg to 77kg. He loves it for the challenge and how it clears the mind. “A lot of times, it’s when I’m running that I have breakthrough ideas.”

One such idea is Super X-Fi, his other great passion right now.

This is a revolutionary audio technology that Creative has spent the last 20 years developing – to the tune of US\$100 million (S\$136



In 2007, Creative Technology’s Mr Sim Wong Hoo decided to run a marathon on a whim. He has since run more than 50 marathons including a dozen ultramarathons. Running, he says, clears his mind and gives him breakthrough ideas. His latest Super X-Fi technology has won rave reviews for allowing headphones to produce sounds in all their 3D wonder. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

million), he says – and which is finally bearing fruit.

Super X-Fi allows headphone users to experience sound in expansive, three-dimensional detail, like in real life.

The headphone audio industry has been trying to achieve this “holy grail” for a long time, he says.

Right now, no matter how good a pair of headphones is, the sound is forced and “claustrophobic”, as Mr Sim puts it.

There have been attempts at creating 3D audio on headsets but all have been “crap”.

His Super X-Fi technology involves an artificial intelligence engine that customises the user’s audio experience based on how he perceives sound in the real world.

Creative showed a prototype of it at the prestigious Consumer Electronics Show (CES) last January. It won rave reviews with audio sites using words like “glorious” and “magical” to describe it. It also got a Best of CES award.

In September last year, it created a Super X-Fi enabled dongle called the SXFI Amp that connects to headphones, and has since added more products.

At this year’s CES earlier this month, Super X-Fi bagged 13 Best of CES awards. Creative is now looking to allow audio firms to use it in their headphones.

His technology is akin to black and white TV switching to colour TV, he says. He adds: “With Creative or no Creative, that will happen. I think Creative is ahead right now.”

Super X-Fi has breathed new life into the company he started as a computer shop in Chinatown in 1981.

Its Sound Blaster sound card, launched in 1989, was a game changer in allowing PCs to generate quality sound. It has sold 400 million units.

But with competition and industry changes, Creative’s fortunes took a dive in recent times and his name also dropped off the headlines.

With Super X-Fi, market interest and confidence have rebounded.

Following its CES showing last year, its share price hit highs of \$9.77 after years of languishing under \$2. It closed at \$5.21 last Friday.

LUNCH is at Creative’s headquarters which is housed over five floors in the International Business Park complex in Jurong.

The main lobby area is well lit but doesn’t have the design-conscious vibe you now expect of tech companies. It feels more like a homely, if high-end, SME.

It is our first meeting and Mr Sim turns out to be likeable. He is down to earth and personable, and has an

easy laugh and manner.

He’s waiting at the reception and leads me to a sound room. Like journalists who have visited Creative over the past year, I’m given a briefing and demonstration of Super X-Fi by him and his team.

My face and ears are first mapped by an app, then some audio thing is rather alarmingly zinged through my ears via headphones, to test how I perceive sound.

It’s all bewildering to me and I’m no audiophile, but the reviewers are right – the sound you get is impressive.

After 70 minutes, we head to the boardroom for lunch. A spread of dishes from Taiwanese restaurant chain Din Tai Fung – fried rice, *xiao long bao*, pork cutlet – awaits.

It’s more for me than him because it emerges he has little interest in food. He picks restaurants based on how easy it is to park his car and prefers eateries that are empty.

He says cheerfully that he’s an “outlier” and a “contrarian”.

“Everything people do, I don’t do. They like good food, I don’t like good food.”

This doesn’t sound right, so he clarifies: “Not that I don’t like good food, but to me eating is just a chore. If only there’s a pill I can swallow and, you know, solve my hunger.”

He revels in being unorthodox and shares other examples of his maverick ways.

In 1999, he was cracking his head for a crazy idea to usher in the new millennium.

“You can go to a tall building, throw one million dollars and let people go crazy, but that will cause accidents, so no good. Or you can do charity, which I did already...”

“I wanted to do something people cannot do.”

With the clock ticking away, he decided to write a book and get it delivered to bookshops by Dec 31.

Problem was, he had six weeks before that deadline.

He did it, penning a 270-page tome called *Chaotic Thoughts From The Old Millennium* which he dedicated to “the younger generation, the hope of the new millennium”.

He passes me a copy.

Design-wise, it looks like a textbook and so is not very appealing. But when I went back and read it, the content is well written, engaging and inspiring.

The book comprises short chapters on random topics.

There are bits on his widowed mother and their farm in Bukit Panjang, his student days at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Creative’s early years and assorted brain-teasers, magic tricks and a parable or two.

His craze for running also came about in an unusual way, he lets on.



## WHAT WE ATE

Assorted dishes from  
Din Tai Fung

## NO ENDORSEMENT NEEDED

**Nothing. I don’t require people to endorse me. I think I’ve done my job. We created Sound Blaster. It’s a big thing already. Normally you’ve got one shot in your life.**



MR SIM WONG HOO,

on what he wants to be remembered for.

Back in 2007, he was out with his former classmates one Friday when a friend – Ng Kai Wa, who was Creative’s co-founder and now a board member – mentioned he was doing a marathon the following Sunday.

“I was very envious. Aiyah, wish I could be like him,” Mr Sim recalls thinking. “I was not into athletics... I was not fit. Plump.”

On a whim, he decided he would run the marathon too. His secretary managed to register him and the following week, he trained by walking to and from his Bukit Timah house to Creative in Jurong.

That Sunday, he completed the race in a credible six hours 40 minutes, walking half the way.

The following week, he called Mr Ng and said they should try an 84.4km ultramarathon next.

“He said, ‘You’re crazy. That’s in March.’ I said, ‘Why not? Let’s go and try.’ He said, ‘You go, I go.’ I said, ‘OK, let’s go.’ So my second marathon was an ultramarathon.”

After his first marathon, he had another crazy idea: He would do an “age-km” run every birthday.

He had not been one to celebrate birthdays. “It’s a random date, there’s no meaning. And I hate birthday cakes. For goodness’ sake,

don’t do birthday cakes. It’s unhealthy, it’s a waste of money.”

Instead, he resolved to do something healthy and more fun.

“I started from my 53rd birthday, so that’s 53km. And then 54, I ran 54km.” Last year, he ran 63km, which took him 10 hours.

He’s a non-conformist in other ways. While talking about Apple – Creative famously got a US\$100 million payout from it for a patent breach – I ask if he uses an Apple iPhone.

He fishes out a phone from his pocket and I gasp. It’s an old Nokia Asha.

There’s a slip of white paper pasted on the back of the phone with rows of printed numbers like C1 10km 5K5 1h50 1150. It’s his ultramarathon plan. “C” stands for checkpoint and the rest are timings he must keep to stay in the race.

If he had his way, the Nokia would be the only phone he has. But with Super X-Fi, he needs a smartphone for music and so has a Google Pixel which he keeps on silent mode.

He’s not on any social media platforms either. “If you see anything, it’s fake, it’s not me.”

WHILE Creative seems to be regaining its mojo, I wonder how he coped when things were down.

He meets the question head-on but does become a little pensive.

He has kept a low profile in recent years because “there’s nothing to say except bad news, right? Company is not performing. So whatever I say, people will not believe until they see the result”.

That result is Super X-Fi, which he “just dumped money into” over the years because he kept a long-term view of the company, and believed it could be done.

When it was time to launch it, he hesitated about fronting it, wanting to leave it to Creative’s new generation.

“But the team said I should go out and help them do this.”

He says he’s introverted by nature but had to force himself to put on a different face during Creative’s heyday.

When the accolades dried up, it was easy to revert to his true self. “During those kind of bad years, I’m OK, I’m myself.”

In fact, tough times invigorate him more. When Creative was listed on Nasdaq in 1992 – it delisted there in 2007 – and feted, he felt empty.

“I felt hollow. Nothing much to congratulate. So what? It’s just a number, a point in life.”

The tough years that followed have been energising.

I ask what in his life has given him the most happiness.

“I’m at peace” is his response. He doesn’t believe in wild swings

of emotions. “To have happiness, you must have sorrow. When you want to keep at peace, then you don’t have a lot of happiness, you also don’t have a lot of sorrow.”

It puzzles him why some people rave over things like, say, food.

“I’ve kind of transcended above all these earthly things.”

While he was born a Christian, his religion now is “my own”.

He doesn’t get a salary at Creative but owns 33 per cent of the company. “I did not sell shares. I bought back a lot of shares at high prices, and I’m proud of it.”

Money, he maintains, is not important.

It’s because you have it, I say.

“No,” he replies. “It’s not important.”

I ask if he has a Crazy Rich Asian lifestyle. Ferrari? He practically snorts. “I think it’s a sin to drive something like that.”

He drives himself, in a Toyota Camry. The fanciest car he had was a Lexus. He lives in a semi-detached house in Bukit Timah, does not mix around “big shots” and counts running in Gunung Tahan in Malaysia as an exotic holiday.

When I ask what he wants to be remembered for, he shoots back: “Nothing.”

“I don’t require people to endorse me. I think I’ve done my job. We created Sound Blaster. It’s a big thing already. Normally you’ve got one shot in your life.”

But he has another shot actually – Super X-Fi.

There are challenges. For one thing, it is difficult to market audio. There is also an educational process in getting people to understand how to use it, which is a hurdle. And now that the product is out, others are ready to pounce on it.

“I tell my teams, ‘The cat is out of the bag. The whole world has seen it, they are coming after us, so we have to run like hell.’”

But he is confident because Creative has had a long head start.

We’ve come to the end of a lengthy and, for me, fascinating lunch. I’ve done most of the eating and there’s a bit of food left.

I ask him for photos of him running in case I need them for this story.

He sends me a WhatsApp of the pictures later and adds: “btw, just had dinner from the lunch leftovers. Still tasty. Sinful to throw them away. So thanks for the dinner and the lunch too.”

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**SCAN TO WATCH**  
Mr Sim Wong Hoo on the tech behind Super X-Fi.  
http://str.sg/simwh





## War on sugar

# Seeking sweet spot in cutting sugar intake



ST PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: CHING CHOON HIONG

Sugar consumption has gone up, putting a dent in the Health Ministry's War on Diabetes. But it is hitting back by proposing four measures to reduce sugar intake. Experts and drink companies weigh in on the matter.

**Felicia Choo**

While on the move in his job as a real estate agent, fruit juices and soda drinks became some of Mr Sum Chong Ming's favourite ways to quench his thirst.

Even though he had water with him, it just didn't taste the same.

"I have a sweet tooth and ice cream and pastries are my biggest weaknesses," says Mr Sum. "I can eat a whole tub of ice cream at one go."

But he put the brakes on consuming sugary food and drinks last year, after a health check-up showed he was pre-diabetic.

Mr Sum, 59, now tracks his daily sugar intake with the help of an app from the National University Hospital (NUH), and has cut his intake of sugar and carbohydrates further. The change in his diet has improved his health, with his HbA1c – a measure of average blood sugar level – dropping from 6.9 per cent to 6.3 per cent over the last three months.

He also shed more than 5kg over the last six months.

While Mr Sum has managed to eat less sugar, people here are consuming more sugar than before.

Singaporeans' sugar intake increased from 59g a day in 2010 to 60g last year – the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends a maximum of 50g – with pre-packaged sugar-sweetened drinks the largest contributor, based on last year's National Nutrition Survey by the Health Promotion Board (HPB).

Which is why the Ministry of Health (MOH) is targeting such drinks in its latest efforts to bring down sugar consumption as part of its War on Diabetes campaign.

Last month, the MOH proposed four measures: banning the sale of higher-sugar, pre-packaged drinks; imposing a tax on manufacturers and importers of pre-packaged drinks; a mandatory front-of-pack nutrition label on pre-packaged drinks; and placing wider restrictions or banning the advertisements of high-sugar drinks.

The measures, which are not mutually exclusive, have been put up for public consultation that started last month and ends on Friday.

Insight looks at how Singaporeans' intake of sugar got to be so high, and speaks to experts and industry players about what is being done, and can be done, to reverse the trend.

## RISING SUGAR CONSUMPTION

People everywhere – not just in Singapore – are taking more sugar.

But regularly consuming too much for a prolonged period is bad for health.

Excessive sugar consumption is linked to conditions like obesity, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, tooth decay and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, says Dr Lim Su Lin, NUH's chief dietitian.

Sugar provides calories with no added nutrients. There is no harm if one consumes too little or no sugar as carbohydrates from wholegrains

can be the main source of energy."

The WHO recommends a daily sugar intake of, ideally, 25g (which is half the maximum recommended amount), but Singaporeans are already taking more than twice that.

With drinks making up more than half of the 60g of sugar that people here take every day, it is no wonder that the MOH has been stepping up its War on Diabetes, a campaign that was launched in 2016 to tackle the disease.

Two years ago, seven major soft drink manufacturers pledged to reduce sugar content in all their drinks here to 12 per cent and below by 2020.

The Diabetes Prevention and Care Taskforce worked with Coca-Cola, F&N Foods, Malaysia Dairy Industries, Nestle, PepsiCo, Pokka, and Yeo Hap Seng, whose products make up 70 per cent of the total pre-packaged – sugar-sweetened beverages market in Singapore.

The eventual goal is to get Singaporeans to cut their sugar intake – based on the already superseded 59g – by a quarter by 2020, the HPB said last year.

But that looks like a tall order.

High-sugar food and drinks are getting cheaper and becoming more easily available, while portion sizes are getting bigger and people are eating more processed food, experts say.

Professor Rob van Dam, an epidemiologist at the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, says: "One of the reasons for the increased portion size of sugary beverages is probably that the incremental cost of producing larger-sized beverages is relatively low, while a larger beverage size gives consumers the feeling they get better value for money."

"This is problematic because people tend to have a 'unit bias' – they tend to think one unit, for example one cup of a beverage, is the normal amount to consume, even though the unit size increases."

Business also comes into play – sugar is easily transportable as high-fructose corn syrup, and highly marketed because foods containing lots of sugar tend to have high profit margins, says Professor Eric Finkelstein, who is with the health services and systems research programme at Duke-NUS Medical School.

Assistant Professor Yusuf Ali, who specialises in metabolic diseases at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, says another major factor could be that Singaporeans are eating more.

"When dining out, charging for a glass of tap water may compel many to order a sugary drink instead," he adds.

Prof Yusuf also points out that because sugar is found in so many products, it is probably not possible to single out a particular sector for the increase in sugar consumption.

In fact, while Singaporeans get most of their sugar from pre-packaged, sugar-sweetened drinks, overall they are consuming less sugar from drinks and more from food like sauces, confectionery and



desserts, figures from the National Nutrition Survey show.

In 2010, sugar from drinks made up 59 per cent of people's total sugar intake, while sugar from food was 41 per cent.

There has since been a reversal, with sugar from drinks contributing to 55 per cent of people's total sugar intake last year, whereas sugar from food rose to 45 per cent.

Still, beverages remain a major source of sugar for two reasons – they are frequently consumed and, especially if different levels of tax are used for different concentrations of sugar in beverages.

And it has been shown that taxes on beverages result in a modest decrease in net calorie intake and a bit of weight loss, says Prof Finkelstein.

But the less palatable effect is higher prices for consumers if beverage manufacturers decide to pass that tax on.

"Each measure will have differential effects but the devil is in the details," says Prof Finkelstein.

"Bans on products tend to be more effective than taxes in reducing consumption of the targeted product, which tend to be more effective than labels."

The most effective strategy, he proposes, is to push the scope of the tax and labelling further.

"I would be inclined to promote a strategy that taxes and labels 'worst in class' products across all product categories, and not just sugar-sweetened beverages, in terms of added sugars and fats," he says.

"Our research shows that a labelled tax strategy such as this will move people away from purchasing these products. It also will encourage suppliers to reformulate in efforts to avoid the tax."

## REDUCING THIRST FOR PRE-PACKAGED SUGARY DRINKS

So, with the MOH's focus on pre-packaged drinks for now, can the proposed measures together or individually – a ban, sugar tax, front-of-pack nutrition labelling or advertising restrictions – halt the rise in sugar intake?

These strategies are likely to be more effective if they are designed to complement one another, say experts.

Prof van Dam thinks that the sugar tax should go hand in hand with other approaches to reach out to the different strata of the population.

For example, the advertising ban is primarily aimed at restricting children's exposure to high-sugar products, which in turn decreases parental purchases to satisfy children's whims.

Educating the public to be more conscious of their shopping choices, especially with regard to SSBs, is not draconian or undemocratic in nature.

So, is a total ban on pre-packed high-sugar drinks tantamount to depriving consumers of their personal choices?

Should such a total ban materialise, it may appear that individual freedom has yet again been infringed upon in the name of promoting public health.

Singapore already plans to ban pre-packaged drinks with more than 12 per cent sugar in 2020, with the explicit support of seven major soft drink manufacturers.

Still, a standard 330ml serving of such a drink with 12 per cent sugar content effectively contains 40g or around 10 teaspoons of sugar, whereas the World Health Organisation recommends not more than six teaspoons per day for better health.

What about the sugar tax, which several neighbouring countries including Brunei, Thailand and the Philippines have introduced?

To date, sugar taxes have been typically implemented by policymakers through a selective excise

reformulating their drinks to introduce less-sugar options, in line with the growing number of health-conscious consumers.

Consumer products company Malaysia Dairy Industries says that all of its beverages under the well-known Marigold and Vitagen brands have achieved the HPB's 12 per cent sugar (12g per 100ml) target for the industry, with a few, small-volume drinks containing more than 11g of sugar per 100ml.

"There is a continuous shift in consumers' palate for sweetness, and products with less sugar or no sugar added have been experiencing a steady increase year on year," says the company's general manager, Mr Leong Yin Hoe.

Coca-Cola Singapore says that since making the pledge to reduce sugar content in its drinks, it has launched several new lower- and no-sugar drinks and has also rethought several of its recipes in Singapore to reduce sugar.

Such drinks are proving popular here, with sales of two popular no-sugar drinks – Coca-Cola No Sugar and Authentic Tea House Ayataka Green Tea seeing double-digit growth last year, while the non-alcoholic ready-to-drink sector as a whole contracted over the same period, the company says.

"We will also continue to make smaller packages available so that managing sugar is easier, give people the information they need to make informed choices, and diligently follow our longstanding policy not to target advertising at children under age 12 anywhere in the world, including in Singapore," Coca-Cola Singapore adds.

It previously announced an additional commitment to reduce the sugar content in its sugar-sweetened beverages by 10 per cent next year.

The general manager of food and beverage company F&N Foods, Ms Jennifer See, says it has reduced its sugar footprint by 40 per cent over the last 14 years, and 80 per cent of its beverage sales is made up of Healthier Choice Symbol products.

However, on the MOH's pro-

posed measures, Malaysia Dairy Industries' Mr Leong raised concerns about how to ensure a level playing field for home-grown and non-local market players, which he says is critical for the sustainability of local companies.

"Will there be similar control of imported products? What about non-packaged beverages and freshly prepared or made-to-order beverages?" he asks.

"A holistic approach should be taken to deal with the matter and (the) overall objective of lowering Singaporeans' sugar intake to combat diabetes."

Prof van Dam notes that if manufacturers are successful in producing lower-sugar beverages, that may open new business opportunities in Singapore and abroad.

Some bubble tea brands also say that more customers are showing a preference for less sugary options.

Nearly 80 per cent of customers at the popular Gong Cha chain of outlets opt for a sugar level of 50 per cent and below, while home-grown brand Liho says more customers have been asking for lower-sugar levels and sugar substitutes like plant extract stevia since the War on Diabetes kicked off.

Another chain, Koi – popular for its Taiwanese bubble tea – has 15 Healthier Choice drinks endorsed by the HPB, but its drinks also have a 120 per cent sugar-level option.

"The 120 per cent sugar (option) was introduced as we understand Singapore holds a stronger palate and there is demand," says its spokesman.

At the end of the day, it is a matter of choice by the consumer.

Take Mr Sum. He says that cutting out more sugar was not so difficult after all. "It boils down to individual discipline," he says.

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## Three experts' views on four proposals

Singaporeans take an average of 60g of sugar a day, which is higher than advisable.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says 50g of sugar is the maximum people should take a day. Ideally, it says, consumption should be no more than 25g a day.

The WHO guideline does not refer to the sugars in fresh fruit and vegetables, and sugars naturally present in milk, because there is no reported evidence of adverse effects of consuming these.

The Ministry of Health has proposed four measures to try to reduce the consumption of pre-packaged sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) here.

Professor Teo Yik Ying, dean of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, Dr Jeremy Lim, consultant at global consulting firm Oliver Wyman, and Straits Times senior health correspondent Salma Khalik give their views on the proposals.

### BAN HIGH-SUGAR DRINKS:

**Teo Yik Ying:** Infringes on personal liberty and freedom of choice.

**Jeremy Lim:** Not in favour.

**Salma Khalik:** There are too many extremely high-sugar drinks that are not pre-packaged, and so do not fall under this proposal. It is thus of limited use. Having said that, SSBs are cheaper and more easy to obtain, so getting them off the shelves might be helpful.

But the final decision hinges on what is considered really high sugar content. It is fine to have a ban if only a small number of drinks are involved, but not if it means clearing the shelves of a number of favourites.

**IMPOSE A TAX ON HIGH-SUGAR DRINKS**

**TY:** Provides a strong incentive for industry to reformulate and innovate. Clear signal to the public on the downside of consuming beverages high in sugar. Also generates revenue that can be channelled towards bringing down costs of healthy products.

But unless the tax is applied across a wide array of sugar-laden products, singling out only SSBs may lead to substitution effects where consumers obtain their sugar fix from other food products.

**JL:** Graduated taxes based on sugar content make more sense, much like progressive income tax models. Substitution is very real, and taxing only on processed drinks, while ignoring the freshly prepared drinks in coffee shops, cafes and so on would just produce an unfair commercial playing field.

The bigger benefit of taxation might be signalling societal disapproval and nudging manufacturer reformulation, much like what has happened in the United Kingdom.

**SK:** Totally in favour. It is likely to get manufacturers to reduce the sugar content to avoid paying the tax. If this is done gradually, few people would notice the reduction in sugar. If, for one, would appreciate being able to have an SSB without feeling guilty about the amount of sugar consumed.

**TY:** Advertisements do influence the choices of children, and exposure to those of food products high in fat, sugar and salt negatively shape their food preferences. A well-implemented ban on SSBs reduces exposure, and minimises influence from advertisements.

It needs to be properly enforced and extended to all media, including social and online media.

**JL:** The young are the most digitally savvy, and digital marketing typically is better-targeted, or at least difficult to police based on national jurisdictions. Traditional media like print, television and radio can be more effectively policed.

**SK:** Difficult to enforce with the proliferation of social media. But a good idea if it can be done, given the strong influence of advertisements on buying behaviour. But would not be useful if ban is enforced only on some platforms.

**HAVE COMPULSORY FRONT-OF-PACK NUTRITION LABEL**

**TY:** Good if it's a clear infographic that lets consumers do a quick evaluation. But may oversimplify due to the main focus on vilifying negative nutrients, rather than highlighting positive nutrients.

It can be confusing if traffic-light labels are used on the same product but for different categories such as for calories, fat, sugar and sodium. So the item may show both red and green.

**JL:** Good in theory, but the secret drinks are involved, but not if it means clearing the shelves of a number of favourites.

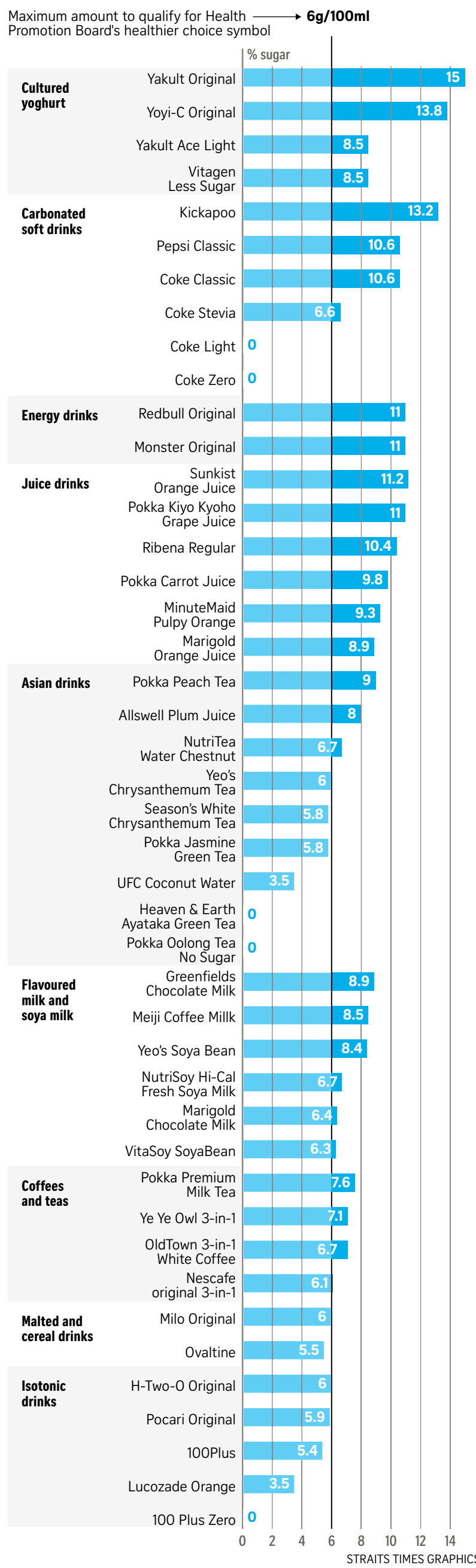
**SK:** Support in principle, but has to be easy to understand, such as an overall rating of whether the food is good for health, neutral or bad for health.

The negative is that it might be too simplistic, or have too many indicators falling into the neutral category – because it is low in one "bad" thing but high in another, such as low in sugar but high in salt and saturated fat. An alternative is to indicate for three or four categories of health concern.

This would make it more difficult for people to decide, but would provide more information. At the very least, it would make people more aware of what they are eating.

Anyone who wants to give feedback on these measures can do so until Jan 25 at [www.each.gov.sg/sugarydrinks](http://www.each.gov.sg/sugarydrinks) or send e-mails to [sugary\\_drinks@hpb.gov.sg](mailto:sugary_drinks@hpb.gov.sg)

## Sugar content in drinks



# Informed public is best weapon against diabetes

Personal choice is all very well, but that choice needs to be based on a real understanding of what's in that bubble tea

**Teo Yik Ying**

Malnutrition is a problem often perceived to be linked to food shortages, but many people do not realise that it can also be caused by excessive consumption of empty calories, such as from sugar.

While close to one billion people across Asia face the threat of food shortage, twice as many are overweight or obese.

This double burden of malnutrition is a threat to governments and societies in Asia, not solely in its impact on health but also on economies due to productivity loss.

The McKinsey Global Institute estimated that the cost of obesity for

the global economy is similar to that from smoking.

Obesity is no longer described as a "problem of affluence", but rather as one of the biggest global public health threats.

We are seeing a similarly catastrophic impact on low- and middle-income countries, as well as rich developed nations with more advanced healthcare systems and educated populations.

The narrative around what causes obesity and related medical conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, has shifted over past decades from vilifying trans-fat to putting a spotlight on sugar. This is hardly surprising, given the volume of research link-

ing excessive sugar consumption to obesity.

## GOV'T'S SUGAR PROPOSALS

Just before Christmas, the Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Board (HPB) announced a public consultation to solicit views for four proposed measures to reduce Singaporeans' intake of sugar from pre-packaged sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs).

These measures include mandatory front-of-pack labelling of nutritional content and restricting the amount of SSB advertising on television and mass media channels.

Two other measures attracted the majority of online buzz, though: an excise tax on pre-packaged SSBs,

and a complete ban on SSBs with excessively high amounts of sugar.

Not unexpectedly, criticisms such as "nanny state" and "tax-hungry government" began to proliferate on social media. There were even cries of "Singapore is increasingly boring" as people discussed the sugar campaign alongside reform measures against tobacco.

Globally, governments have to straddle a difficult and very thin line between enacting measures aimed at protecting the health of populations, versus offering citizens the democratic right to make personal choices.

## OTHER MEASURES NEEDED

When it comes to managing sugar consumption, Singapore has already started adopting a range of measures, including prohibiting the sale of beverages with excessive amounts of sugar in schools and

public sector buildings. The HPB also introduced the Healthier Choice symbol to highlight products with lower levels of sugar.

But these are not enough.

There is a need for a concerted nationwide campaign to highlight the excessive amount of empty calories – those that have no nutritional value – consumed daily from SSBs, including popular beverages such as bubble teas and calorie-dense coffee combinations from cafe chains.

For such a nationwide campaign to be effective, there is a need for parents to reach out to the different strata of the population.

For example, the advertising ban is primarily aimed at restricting children's exposure to high-sugar products, which in turn decreases parental purchases to satisfy children's whims.

Educating the public to be more



### The Health Promotion Board's Healthier Choice symbol highlights healthier food options, including those with lower levels of sugar, but there is a need for a concerted nationwide campaign to show the excessive amount of empty calories consumed daily from sugar-sweetened beverages.

ST FILE PHOTO

mainly aimed at influencing the food and beverage (F&B) industry, rather than changing individual behaviour. Taxation has the effect of encouraging, if not compelling, the F&B industry to reformulate and innovate its products.

It can be an effective way of facilitating the development of healthy sugar replacements, therefore improving the health of the population.

When the F&B industry rejigs its formulae of popular SSBs to fall below the taxation bands, this provides a long-term and impactful change to the supply of calorie-dense SSBs, instead of trying to change the individual behaviour of consumers.

However, implementing the different sugar measures will need to be carefully thought through, which is perhaps the reason for the public consultation.

History shows that industry needs to be given adequate time to reformulate or innovate products to become healthier.

After the denouncement of trans-fat in the 1990s, many food companies developed "low-fat" offerings by using sugar as a taste replacement. This has in part contributed

to the present conundrum.

The challenge is that a responsible decision in the F&B industry aims to maximise profits, while a responsible decision in public health agencies aims to improve the health of the whole population.

The Thai government's strategy is one that Singapore can look at.

While the SSB tax was introduced in September 2017, the actual implementation will happen gradually in three phases over the next six years. Rather than a knee-jerk policy response by regulators, this approach allowed the Thai government to review the impact on consumers and encourage longer-term reformulation.

In this regard, private-public partnership is important to ensure the F&B



War on sugar

# What other countries are doing

## Thailand Consumption plunges after sugar tax imposed

**Tan Hui Yee**  
Indochina Bureau Chief  
In Bangkok

Consumption of sugar in Thailand fell after the kingdom introduced a tax on sugary beverages in 2017. The average Thai person consumed about 26 teaspoons of sugar every day, health officials revealed in 2015. While the sugar is found in snacks and everyday foods such as noodles, most of it is consumed through pre-packed beverages.

Concerned about the healthcare costs from obesity, diabetes and

heart disease, the government introduced a sugar tax to nudge drink-makers to reduce the sweetness of their products. The duty imposed was progressive: Drinks with a sugar content of under 6g per 100ml were exempt, but those with 18g of sugar content per 100ml faced a tax of 1 baht (\$80.043) per litre.

This tax triggered complaints from makers of fruit juices, which have a high natural sugar content. After the tax was launched, prices of bottled green tea went up by 3 to 5 baht each.

According to the latest available data on the website of the Office of the Cane and Sugar Board, domestic sugar consumption from January to September last year was 2.13 million tonnes, a 3 per cent drop from the same period a year before. Dr Piyada Prasertsom, who heads the Bureau of Dental Health and co-ordinates the Sweet Enough Network campaigning for lower sugar consumption, tells The Sunday Times: "There's a report from Office of the Cane and Sugar Board that says domestic sugar consumption dropped one million tonnes last year. We assume that the new sugar tax on beverages has made a great contribution to that because drinks are the main source of sugar for Thais... Thais consume about 30kg to 32kg of sugar a year and we hope to see the number drop by 10 per cent this year."

Research to find the impact of the sugar tax on consumption is being conducted by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and Mahidol University, and results are expected to be published in the second half of this year.

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SWEET RESULTS

There's a report from Office of the Cane and Sugar Board that says domestic sugar consumption dropped one million tonnes last year. We assume that the new sugar tax on beverages has made a great contribution to that because drinks are the main source of sugar for Thais... Thais consume about 30kg to 32kg of sugar a year and we hope to see the number drop by 10 per cent this year.

DR PIYADA PRASERTSOM, who heads the Bureau of Dental Health and coordinates the Sweet Enough Network campaigning for lower sugar consumption.



A monk checking out a display showing the sugar content of various drinks at a hospital in Bangkok. Latest available data on the website of the Office of the Cane and Sugar Board shows Thais' sugar consumption from January to September last year was 2.13 million tonnes, a 3 per cent drop from the same period a year before. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Sugar sculptures in front of the Houses of Parliament in London. Britain's sugar tax has raised £154 million (\$269 million) in its first seven months and is expected to raise about £240 million annually. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Britain Consumers not sold on obesity-risk message

Rebecca Lynne Tan

Britain's sugar tax was implemented last April in a bid to tackle childhood obesity and encourage soft drink producers to reformulate their products or reduce portion sizes. As to how manufacturers responded, HM Revenue & Customs – Britain's tax, payments and Customs authority – says that between the announcement of the tax in 2016 and its implementation two years later, more than 50 per cent

of drinks by volume had enough sugar removed to no longer be affected by the levy.

As a result, fewer drinks than anticipated remained above the levy-paying threshold, which imposes an additional tax of 18 pence (\$0.32) a litre on drinks containing 5g of sugar per 100ml, and 24 pence a litre on drinks with more than 8g of sugar per 100ml.

Known officially as the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, the tax applies to "the packaging and importation of soft drinks containing added sugar".

It is applied to manufacturers, but whether it is passed on to consumers is up to them.

The tax has, however, had minimal impact on consumer behaviour, a Nielsen survey has found.

Findings showed that 62 per cent of British shoppers claimed to not have changed their consumption behaviour after the sugar tax was imposed, while only a fifth checked the sugar content on packages more frequently since the tax came into effect.

So far, the tax has raised £154 million (\$269 million) in its first seven months, and is expected to raise about £240 million annually – less than half the amount initially forecast when the tax was first announced.

The revenue will be channelled towards funding sports activities and breakfast clubs in schools.

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## Other parts of Europe

### FRANCE

What: A soda tax on sugary drinks, which include those made with artificial sweeteners, was introduced with the aim of promoting healthy lifestyles in children and to avoid risks of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

When: 2012. Last July, the rate was revised.

Rate: Until last year, all beverages with added sugar were taxed at a flat rate of €0.075 (\$0.12) a litre. The revision introduced a sliding scale tax, starting at €0.075 for drinks with 1g of sugar per 100ml, and capped at €0.20 a litre for drinks that contain more than 11g of sugar per 100ml.

Impact: A report for the European Union Commission in 2016 found the taxed led to a fall in annual soft drink consumption. Over the years, France has adopted several measures including a ban on the sale of candy and soft drinks from vending machines in schools in 2005. In 2017, it became illegal for restaurants to offer unlimited refills of sugary drinks for a fixed price.

### NORWAY

What: Its sugar tax is payable on both imported and domestically produced sugar.

All sweets, chocolate, chewing gum and items such as biscuits are also taxed. A non-alcoholic beverage tax extends to all sweetened drinks including ones with artificial sweeteners. The sugar tax was designed to raise revenue from little luxuries – it was not aimed at improving health.

When: 1922. Then, last January, the tax on ready-to-eat products with sugar increased by 83 per cent compared to 2017 levels. The tax on sugary non-alcoholic drinks rose by 42 per cent.

Rate: This year's tax rate for chocolate and sugar products is 20.82 Norwegian krone (\$3.30) per kg. The tax on non-alcoholic beverages ranges from 1.70 Norwegian krone for juices and syrup made from fruit, to 28.91 Norwegian krone for concentrates. The tax on sugar is 8.05 Norwegian krone per kg.

Impact: Only one in six children is overweight, according to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, compared to one in three children in the United Kingdom and United States.

### HUNGARY

What: The Public Health

Product Tax was launched to reduce consumption, promote healthy eating and help finance public health services. The tax applies to items in various food and beverage categories including sugar-sweetened drinks, energy drinks and pre-packaged sugar-sweetened products, which can range from sweets and biscuits to fruit preserves, and even to excessively salty snacks.

When: 2011.

Rate: Varying rates. For example, soft drinks with more than 8g of sugar per 100ml are taxed 7 Hungarian forint (\$0.034) per litre, while the tax on confections with added sugar is 130 Hungarian forint per kg.

Impact: Significant. An assessment by Hungary's National Institute for Health Development a year after implementation found that about 40 per cent of manufacturers of unhealthy food products had changed their product formulas to either reduce or eliminate unhealthy ingredients. A study four years later showed that 59 per cent to 73 per cent of consumers had reduced their consumption of the target products.

Rebecca Lynne Tan

## Malaysia Asia's fattest nation needs to do more than tax sugar

**Trinna Leong**  
Malaysia Correspondent  
In Kuala Lumpur

In a bid to curb obesity in Malaysia, the government has opted for a sugar tax to be implemented in April this year.

With nearly half of its population obese, Malaysia is known as Asia's fattest country. The Pakatan Harapan administration believes that taxing soft drinks and juices with high sugar content would help ease the problem.

The excise tax will be 40 sen (\$0.10) per litre for sweetened beverages, applicable to drinks with a sugar content exceeding 5g per 100ml and juices containing more than 12g per 100ml.

The tax also applies to carbonated, flavoured and non-alcoholic drinks.

"Malaysians top the obesity scale in South-east Asia. We are the 'gold medalist'. We also rank high for diabetes and hypertension," said Deputy Health Minister Lee Boon Chye this month, according to the Malay Mail. "The ministry hopes the people will understand the rationale for introducing this measure (soda tax)," said Dr Lee.

Response to the tax has been mixed, with some raising doubts that it will change Malaysians' unhealthy dietary habits. Critics also point out that people could switch to other popular sweet drinks such as teh tarik (frothy tea with milk).

Acknowledging that, Dr Lee is banking on increased awareness



Response to the sugar tax in Malaysia has been mixed, with some doubting it will change people's unhealthy dietary habits. ST PHOTO: TRINNA LEONG

to drive lower sugar consumption.

According to economists, drink-producing companies will likely pass on the tax to consumers.

Critics also say more needs to be done. A measure by the previous government to remove sugar subsidies has had little impact on lower-

ing its consumption among the population. The Malaysian Medical Association says a change in dietary habits as well as more physical activity and exercise are also needed.

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## Philippines Sales down; savings in healthcare a possibility

**Raul Dancel**  
Philippines Correspondent  
In Manila

The Philippines levied taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages on Jan 1 last year, as part of a broader tax reform package and to help avert more than 24,000 premature deaths linked to diseases such as diabetes, stroke and heart failure over 20 years.

A tax of 6 pesos (\$0.16) a litre was slapped on drinks using sugar and other sweeteners, and 12 pesos a litre on high-fructose corn syrup.

Milk, soya milk, natural fruit juices, vegetable juices, and beverages containing purely coconut sap sugar and purely steviol glycosides were exempted.

13%

Increase in retail prices of sugar-sweetened beverages due to the new tax.

Also excluded were ground coffee, instant coffee and pre-packaged powdered coffee, which are staple beverages for many Filipinos.

Retail prices of sugar-sweetened beverages have risen by as much as 13 per cent due to the new tax.

To avoid raising prices by so much, beverage producers, including Coca-Cola and Pepsi, had switched to using sugar in their drinks, instead of high-fructose

corn syrup previously.

The World Health Organisation estimated that over 20 years, the tax could cut consumption and avoid nearly 6,000 deaths related to diabetes, 8,000 from stroke and more than 10,000 from heart diseases.

Finance officials had said the tax could yield healthcare savings of about US\$627 million (\$850 million) and annual revenue of US\$813 million.

In 2013, 31 per cent of the total Philippine adult population of 56.3 million was overweight, with the proportion of overweight youth nearly doubling to 8.3 per cent from close to 5 per cent in a decade. Also, it has been reported that 87 per cent of Filipinos suffer from tooth decay.

Sales of sugar-sweetened beverages at mom-and-pop stores have fallen. A survey by the Nielsen research group a month after the sugar tax was imposed showed that sales of powdered tea fell 18.1 per cent, while powdered juice sales fell 15.4 per cent and carbonated soft drinks by 7 per cent.

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Sales of sugar-sweetened beverages at mom-and-pop stores in the Philippines have fallen in the wake of taxes imposed last year. ST FILE PHOTO

## United States Hits, misses and fightback by businesses

**Charissa Yong**  
US Correspondent  
In Washington

Eight cities across the US have imposed taxes of between one US cent and three US cents (between \$0.02 and \$0.04) an ounce (30ml) on sugary drinks, the largest source of added sugar in Americans' diets, since 2014.

While some of these soda taxes have been successful, others face a backlash from local grocers and consumers, with Cook County in Illinois repealing its tax just two months after it came into effect.

Each tax also faces fierce opposition from the national soda industry, with the American Beverage Association spending millions fighting public health groups and defeating taxes at the ballot box.

The first city to pass a soda tax was Berkeley in California, where 40 per cent of 14-year-olds were overweight or obese, according to a 2013 public health report.

The tax of one cent per ounce targeted distributors of low-nutrition, high-sugar drinks, such as soda, energy drinks and juice with added sugar and syrups, but excluded diet soda, fruit juice and drinks with milk.

A year later, an American Journal of Public Health study found that the tax had cut soda consumption by 26 per cent and increased water intake by 63 per cent.

The tax also slashed sales of sugary drinks by nearly 10 per cent in its first year, and raised US\$1.4 million for child nutrition and community health programmes, another study found.

Three other cities in California – San Francisco, Oakland and Albany – where two in three teenagers drink at least one soda a day, putting them at risk of Type 2 diabetes, also passed soda taxes in 2016. The taxes were found to have increased water intake by 19 per cent in San Francisco and Oakland.

Seattle, Philadelphia, Boulder and Cook County also passed soda taxes. But Cook County repealed its tax – which had all along been marketed primarily as a way to raise revenue and only secondarily to fight obesity – after strong opposition from residents and retailers, who said they had been hurt by its slew of taxes.

Public health groups in California were also dealt a blow last June, when the state banned new local tax on sodas until 2031.

The ban was passed as part of a compromise with business and labour lobby groups in a larger fight over other taxes.

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Eight cities across the US have imposed taxes on sugary drinks, the largest source of added sugar in Americans' diets, since 2014. While some of these soda taxes have been successful, others face a backlash from local grocers and consumers. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

## India 'Sin tax' does nothing to quench thirst for sugary drinks

India accounts for 49 per cent of the world's diabetes burden, with an estimated 72 million cases in 2017. The Indian Medical Association estimates that Indians consume as many as 16 to 20 teaspoons of sugar a day, far above the WHO's prescription. PHOTO: REUTERS



**Debarshi Dasgupta**  
India Correspondent  
In New Delhi

Often dubbed the "diabetes capital of the world", India announced its intent to reduce the intake of sugary drinks by placing them in the highest goods and services tax bracket of 28 per cent in July, 2017.

In addition, sweetened aerated water and flavoured water were slapped with a 12 per cent "compensation cess", or sin tax, a category reserved primarily for harmful products such as tobacco.

While this has made sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) more ex-

pensive for consumers, there is no evidence to suggest it has led to lower consumption of such drinks.

India's carbonated drinks sector is estimated to grow an average 3.7 per cent annually between 2017 and 2021, according to Euromonitor International.

Beverage majors Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have made aggressive attempts to reach out to India's rural parts with drinks that retail for as little as 10 rupees (\$0.20).

Mr Amit Khurana, programme director for food safety and toxins at the Centre for Science and Environment, tells The Sunday Times that "sin taxes" are an important tool to discourage SSBs. "But taxes alone are not enough. SSBs are marketed aggressively and the deterrent effect of taxes on SSBs sold at low prices is likely limited."

Nonetheless, these firms have been tweaking their product range in India by introducing beverages with more fruit content and less

sugar to cater to a growing demand for "healthier" drinks.

India accounts for 49 per cent of the world's diabetes burden, with an estimated 72 million cases in 2017. This is expected to nearly double to 134 million by 2025.

While the World Health Organisation prescribes six teaspoons of sugar a day, the Indian Medical Association estimates Indians consume from 16 to 20 teaspoons daily.

India has made little progress on curtailing the ease of availability of SSBs and their promotion.

"(Sugar sweetened beverages) should not be available at all in schools and celebrities should not be advertising these drinks. Their advertisements in mass media, including on the Internet, must also be regulated," says Mr Khurana.

"There are examples of labelling practices that warn consumers. India needs similar measures."

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# Letter to Mr S. Rajaratnam, my mentor and teacher

In this open letter addressed to Mr S. Rajaratnam, Kishore Mahbubani outlines the impact the late Singapore Foreign Minister had on him.

Dear Mr Rajaratnam,

You have been a strong and silent source of inspiration for me all my life, pushing me to go beyond the normal boundaries and comfort zones that we would like to wrap ourselves in.

Your enormous political courage was the biggest source of inspiration. You displayed it most fiercely when you took on the virtual mission impossible of riding the communist tiger, with your political comrades, especially Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee. This dangerous alliance with the communists in Singapore was necessary in the struggle to free Singapore from British colonial rule. The risks were formidable. Until then, virtually all the non-communist parties who rode on the communist tiger ended up being eaten by the tiger.

You saw what happened in Eastern Europe in the 1950s. Bulgaria's Nikola Petkov, whose Agrarian party was part of the Fatherland Front coalition that included the Communist Party, was executed in 1947 after the communists took control. In Czechoslovakia, the communists had forced other parties out of the coalition government by 1948.

The Hungarian Communist Party led by Matyas Rakosi famously used "salami tactics" to get rid of the non-communists in the coalition government. No wonder your wife Piroška, who was Hungarian, was constantly worried for your safety throughout your long-drawn struggle against the communists in Singapore.

Future historians will marvel that the only party to have ridden the communist tiger and ended up eating the tiger, instead of being eaten by it, was the People's Action Party (PAP) led by Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee and you. All three of you risked your lives. But you believed in a cause and were ready to sacrifice yourselves for a greater cause. That took rare courage.

## COURAGE IN CUBA

Courage is also contextual. When I accompanied you to attend the Non-Aligned Summit in Havana, Cuba, in September 1979, we knew that we were walking into a lion's den. We went there to oppose the Soviet-supported Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978. The Vietnamese had installed a quisling regime led by Heng Samrin. Castro and Cuba were among the staunchest allies of the Soviet Union. Hence, ignoring all rules of procedure, Castro installed the Heng Samrin delegation as the legitimate representative from Cambodia. We protested.

Castro cleverly engineered a small meeting when he filled the room with presidents and premiers who were staunch allies of the Soviet Union, including Saddam Hussein, Hafez al-Assad and Muammar Gaddafi. You were only a humble foreign minister surrounded by heads of government. The atmosphere in the room was downright intimidating.

Any normal person would have been intimidated at being so out-gunned and outnumbered. Yet, not once did you flinch. You fought like a lion and stood your ground, earning the grudging respect of Fidel Castro and his Soviet team. And your courage paid off. Even though the Heng Samrin delegation had been legitimised in the 94-member Non-Aligned Movement, it failed to gain the Cambodian seat of the UN General Assembly barely a month later. Your fierce and undaunting courage in a white-hot moment has inspired me to occasionally stand alone and fight against the conventional wisdom of the time.

Lee Kuan Yew could be very forceful and intimidating when he expressed his views. Yet you never wavered from your belief in democracy.

Yet, if anyone had met you in person then, he would have been surprised to hear of this fierce streak. In person, you were never intimidating. Your kind and gentle temperament, making everyone around you feel at ease, was truly remarkable.

Like Mahatma Gandhi, you exuded natural humility. You never boasted of your achievements, even though one of your shrewd stories was selected to be included in the 1947 volume published in New York, entitled *A World Of Great Sto-*



Mr Rajaratnam fought for the multiracial ideal of a Malaysian Malaysia after Singapore joined Malaysia in 1963, even as the Malay elite was determined to preserve its political dominance. After Singapore's eviction from Malaysia in 1965, he continued to believe in a society which treated all races as equals. ST FILE PHOTO

elite in Malaysia was determined to preserve its political dominance. Hence Singapore's eviction from Malaysia in 1965 could have been anticipated.

But you didn't give up the cause. You continued to believe in a society which treated all races as equals. Hence, the most shining contribution you have made to Singapore is the drafting of the Singapore Pledge, which captures your ideas so forcefully:

We, the citizens of Singapore, regard ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language or religion, to build a democratic society based on justice and equality so as to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress for our nation.

It's significant that the word "democratic" is firmly enplaced in the pledge. You believed that the man-one-vote system, despite its flaws, is basically sound, although some of your colleagues disagreed with you. As you said: "I believe in democracy. Here Kuan Yew and I don't agree... Lee Kuan Yew says you cannot trust democracy. I believe you can and you must."

Lee Kuan Yew could be very forceful and intimidating when he expressed his views. Yet you never wavered from your belief in democracy.

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Like Mahatma Gandhi, you exuded natural humility. You never boasted of your achievements, even though one of your shrewd stories was selected to be included in the 1947 volume published in New York, entitled *A World Of Great Sto-*

ries: 115 Stories, The Best Of Modern Literature. You joined the likes of Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald and John Steinbeck, in this volume. The only other Asian writer featured in this volume was Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. You had joined the A-League of global writers. Yet, in all the years we were together, from 1971 to 1991, you never mentioned this to me once.

## GEOPOLITICAL REALISM

If you were to wake up today, your ruthlessly realistic geopolitical nose would also sense we are now experiencing some of the most powerful geopolitical shifts in human history.

When I was a young man of 25, barely three years out of college, you invited me and other young officials to join your weekly ministerial meetings. Some of the best education I got in geopolitics was through my participation in these weekly meetings. This education continued when I sat with you in the car, driving you from Kuala Lumpur to visit your brother in Seremban in the 1970s, and when you visited New York, when I served as Singapore's Ambassador to the UN from 1984 to 1989. Conversations with you were such a joy, especially after you began your first glass of whisky at cocktail hour.

Your ruthlessness was based on one key principle: never shun away from the truth, even if that truth proves to be painful and inconvenient. There was one point you repeated to us constantly: "Never tell me what you think I want to hear. Always tell me what I ought to hear."

At our meetings, you would welcome contradictory, even dissenting, views. You did not repeat the common mistake of many leaders who surrounded themselves with sycophants. Instead, you wanted to hear a real diversity of views, even if they challenged the conventional wisdom of the time or your views.

## VIEWS ON CHINA

There is no doubt that you would be pleased by the spectacular recovery China has made. You were the first Singapore leader to visit China in March 1975. In your first visit, where you called on Zhou Enlai, you saw at first hand the abject poverty of China. Beijing had no private cars. Only bicycles on the road. The people were dressed in drab uniformity. There were no skyscrapers, no neon signs.

In your fourth and last visit in 1985, you saw China take steps towards modernisation with its special economic zones in southern China. China invited Dr Goh Keng Swee to be its economic adviser. You encouraged this, saying: "I believe a modernised and prosperous China embracing some one billion people will be an economic revolution which would have positive consequences for the world."

Hence, you would be gratified to see Beijing today. As a metropolis, it looks more like New York, the No. 1 city when you were alive. The Chinese economy has become even more dynamic than most economies: in mobile payments, in e-commerce, in fast trains and even in artificial intelligence.

Indeed, in some respects, the Chinese economy has become even more dynamic than most economies: in mobile payments, in e-commerce, in fast trains and even in artificial intelligence.

Tommy Koh also described well another one of your legacies: "One characteristic of the Singapore School of Diplomacy is to be realistic about the world, but not to be intimidated by some powerful states."

These principles forged by you remain the basis of how Singapore conducts its foreign relations even till today.

One of the most unforgettable visits of my life was when I accompanied you on a visit to Moscow in 1976. It could not have been an easy visit for you. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia had fallen to the communists a year earlier. The Soviet leaders knew that Singapore had sympathised with American efforts to prevent this from happening. Hence, we could have had a cold and hostile reception in Moscow.

Instead, I was struck by the warmth and graciousness of the Soviet officials who received us. The most stunning breakfast table of food I had ever seen in my life was in the official guest house in Moscow. A table 30 ft long and 10 ft wide was filled completely with food. There also met the then legendary foreign minister of the

Soviet Union, Mr Andrei Gromyko. You made it clear to him that even though Singapore was non-communist at home, it was not anti-communist in its foreign policy. Singapore wanted to have good relations with all great powers. Hence, while Singapore welcomed American naval vessels at its port, it would also welcome Soviet naval vessels. Gromyko was also floored by your charm. I remember well the advice you gave to us when we were your diplomats: You said we had to be charming because "who will talk to you if you are not charming?" Singapore is a small country." You also taught us to dress well.

Your name will be etched in history forever as one of the five signatories of the Asean Charter on Aug 8, 1967. If, like Rip Van Winkle, you woke up today, you would also be astonished by the spectacular success of Asean. When you signed it, little did you know that it would last. Indeed, two of its predecessors, ASA and Maphilindo, died within two years. In our book *The Asean Miracle*, Jeffery Sng and I try to explain why Asean succeeded. I have no doubt that one reason why Asean did not die of infant mortality in its early years was because you were the foreign minister of Singapore during this period. Your quiet, modest and unassuming way set the tone for friendly discussions among the then unfriendly states of South-east Asia. You also imbued Asean with a deep culture of pragmatism that has stood the test of time.

This culture of pragmatism in Singapore's foreign policy, dealing with the real world as it is, and not with a world we wish to have, has been one of your greatest gifts to Singapore. It's a culture of pragmatism that was also shared by the two other key founding fathers of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee. The simple reason why Singapore has been the most successful small nation since human history began (as I documented in an essay

of mine) is that Singapore, at its independence in 1965, was led not by one but by three exceptional and gifted leaders. This was the result of an extraordinary accident of history.

The three of you could not have been more different in temperament. Lee Kuan Yew, a brilliant thinker who spoke in a dull fashion, was also fierce and intimidating. You were also a brilliant thinker but not intimidating, even after you delivered a fierce and hard-hitting speech.

DAVID MARSHALL

Indeed, you were even kind to your political enemies. One of the little known facts about Singapore is that even though it is a Chinese-majority state, its first chief minister was a man of Iraqi-Jewish origin, David Marshall. Marshall had fiercely opposed your political party, the PAP. It's a rivalry that went back decades. You have told us a very funny story about one of the first encounters you had with David Marshall in the 1950s:

"And so he gave us a dinner, one of the most lavish dinners. He was a very generous man. There were lots of goodies to eat. Very expensive red wines! We were eating, and he tried to persuade us to join his party which was called the Labour Front. And we enjoyed ourselves, took advantage of his very lavish dinner, very expensive dinner, and then we started explaining very bluntly why we couldn't join the Labour Front. Jokingly, we said, 'because Lee Kuan Yew is a lawyer, and David Marshall is also a lawyer. But a different type of lawyer.' That irritated David Marshall, and he just said, 'I don't want to talk to you people, I'm going home.' And he stepped out, got into his car, and never turned back. And we looked at each other, Kuan Yew and my-



From left: Professor Kishore Mahbubani, Professor Tommy Koh, Mr Goh Kian Chee, Mr S. Dhanabalan, Fidel Castro's brother Ramon, Mr S. Rajaratnam, Mr Rajaratnam's security officer, Singapore diplomats Peter Chan and T. Jasudasan, and Cuban officials at the Non-Aligned Summit meeting in Cuba in 1979. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TOMMY KOH



Mr Lee Kuan Yew and Mr Rajaratnam in 1966. The two were among the pioneer leaders who made Singapore the most successful small nation since human history began, says the writer. He adds that one of Mr Rajaratnam's greatest gifts to Singapore is the culture of pragmatism in the country's foreign policy, dealing with the real world as it is, and not with a world we wish to have.

Soviet Union, Mr Andrei Gromyko.

You made it clear to him that even though Singapore was non-communist at home, it was not anti-communist in its foreign policy. Singapore wanted to have good relations with all great powers. Hence, while Singapore welcomed American naval vessels at its port, it would also welcome Soviet naval vessels. Gromyko was also floored by your charm. I remember well the advice you gave to us when we were your diplomats: You said we had to be charming because "who will talk to you if you are not charming?" Singapore is a small country." You also taught us to dress well.

Your name will be etched in history forever as one of the five signatories of the Asean Charter on Aug 8, 1967. If, like Rip Van Winkle, you woke up today, you would also be astonished by the spectacular success of Asean. When you signed it, little did you know that it would last. Indeed, two of its predecessors, ASA and Maphilindo, died within two years. In our book *The Asean Miracle*, Jeffery Sng and I try to explain why Asean succeeded. I have no doubt that one reason why Asean did not die of infant mortality in its early years was because you were the foreign minister of Singapore during this period. Your quiet, modest and unassuming way set the tone for friendly discussions among the then unfriendly states of South-east Asia. You also imbued Asean with a deep culture of pragmatism that has stood the test of time.

This culture of pragmatism in Singapore's foreign policy, dealing with the real world as it is, and not with a world we wish to have, has been one of your greatest gifts to Singapore. It's a culture of pragmatism that was also shared by the two other key founding fathers of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee. The simple reason why Singapore has been the most successful small nation since human history began (as I documented in an essay

of mine) is that Singapore, at its independence in 1965, was led not by one but by three exceptional and gifted leaders. This was the result of an extraordinary accident of history.

The three of you could not have been more different in temperament. Lee Kuan Yew, a brilliant thinker who spoke in a dull fashion, was also fierce and intimidating. You were also a brilliant thinker but not intimidating, even after you delivered a fierce and hard-hitting speech.

DAVID MARSHALL

Indeed, you were even kind to your political enemies. One of the little known facts about Singapore is that even though it is a Chinese-majority state, its first chief minister was a man of Iraqi-Jewish origin, David Marshall. Marshall had fiercely opposed your political party, the PAP. It's a rivalry that went back decades. You have told us a very funny story about one of the first encounters you had with David Marshall in the 1950s:

"And so he gave us a dinner, one of the most lavish dinners. He was a very generous man. There were lots of goodies to eat. Very expensive red wines! We were eating, and he tried to persuade us to join his party which was called the Labour Front. And we enjoyed ourselves, took advantage of his very lavish dinner, very expensive dinner, and then we started explaining very bluntly why we couldn't join the Labour Front. Jokingly, we said, 'because Lee Kuan Yew is a lawyer, and David Marshall is also a lawyer. But a different type of lawyer.' That irritated David Marshall, and he just said, 'I don't want to talk to you people, I'm going home.' And he stepped out, got into his car, and never turned back. And we looked at each other, Kuan Yew and my-

self, and said, well, since the dinner is here, let us enjoy it! Red wine was there, and we got soaked!"

Yet, despite this long rivalry with him, you invited David Marshall to your office on May 19, 1978. David told me that he thought that you had invited him because you wanted him, as a lawyer, to draft your will. Instead, to David's absolute astonishment, you invited him to become the Singapore Ambassador to France. As Lee Kuan Yew noted about you, "Raja harboured no grudge against old opponents and bore no abiding animosities." Only great souls have this capacity for great forgiveness.

It is equally striking that even after having served as deputy prime minister of Singapore and having dined with the greatest leaders of the world, you never lost your common touch. For you, the belief in socialism, with the inherent desire to improve the lot of your fellow men and women, was not an abstract belief. It was rooted deeply in your soul and personality. You saw all human beings as having equal moral worth. And you treated each and every one with equal kindness and generosity.

Four words could produce more respect for you than any other: that humanity would be far better off. Thanks for being such a great role model in my life.

With warm regards, Kishore

Kishore Mahbubani is senior adviser (university and global relations) and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. He served for 33 years in Singapore's diplomatic service.

This article is excerpted from a longer essay written for the December 2018 issue of *Nexus*, the journal of the Netherlands-based Nexus Institute.

# That glint in the eye of the giving



Ravi Velloor

Associate Editor

On a brief visit to New Delhi two weeks ago, I spent the weekend with a friend, Gaurav Gupta, a veteran General Motors executive who had recently moved from Indonesia, where he briefly ran a tyre company's operations, to launch the MG brand of sport utility vehicles in India for China's SAIC Motor.

During our conversations, the matter of a village school in Kerala set up by my maternal great-grandfather came up briefly.

Some years ago, the extended Velloor clan helped build an auditorium for the school, which currently has some 400 pupils in primary school. These days, we are trying something more ambitious – do up the main building itself. Gaurav listened without saying a word.

As I left the airport next morning, he quietly handed me a cheque for a hundred thousand rupees, or the equivalent of about \$2,000. When I mentioned this on the family message group, the response was overwhelming. Some were amazed that a non-blood relative with no connection at all to Kerala would make such a fine gesture.

I have no idea what unlocks generosity in the human spirit. Mr Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire former mayor of New York for whose news company I worked in the early 2000s, once explained his philanthropy – he ranks alongside Mr Warren Buffett and Mr Bill Gates for the scale of his giving – saying it is partly because he had always admired that special glimmer in the eye of those who made a practice of giving.

Mr Bloomberg's money touches thousands of people. In addition to Bloomberg Philanthropies' five areas of focus – public health, arts and culture, the environment, education, and government innovation – he has continued to support projects of great importance to him, including his alma mater Johns Hopkins University. The university's School of Hygiene and Public Health – the largest public health facility in the US – is named the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

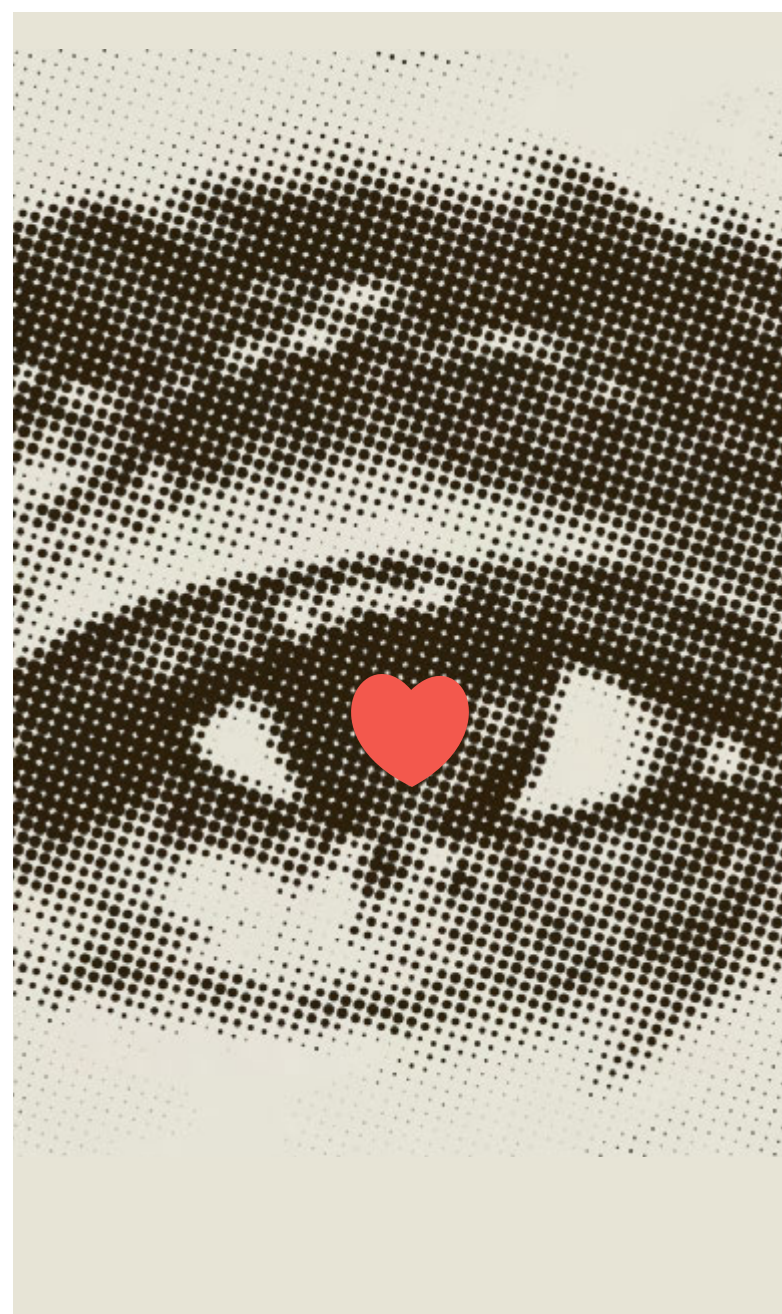
Yet, it is often the forgotten individual who most critically needs help, particularly the poorer students in a mostly-rich nation such as ours.

One of my closest friends, Lai Kwok Kin, made a significant endowment to a polytechnic not too long ago to help its needy students. He says he sometimes comes close to tears on hearing stories of students working in their spare time to earn a little money – not to buy a new handbag or branded sneakers – but often to top up the MRT cards and pay the cellphone bills of younger siblings.

In his perception, the biggest damage caused to the young by not having a little disposable income is the hurt it causes to a person's self-esteem. This is why I thought it was especially thoughtful of Speaker Tan Chuan-jin, who also heads SGCares, a national movement that works to build a more caring society, to include The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund in the list of charities for which he raises funds.

Personal experience suggests that giving without thought of reward is almost invariably compensated, sometimes instantly.

In early December, I learnt that the Temasek Foundation-run Asia Journalism Fellowships had deposited a thousand dollars in my bank account for doing two mentoring sessions with one of the fellows. My first instinct was to buy a pair of Ballo brogues that I'd been eyeing, but deciding that the shoes



ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

were unnecessary, I simply wrote a cheque for the equivalent amount and handed it to my editor's secretary, to be forwarded to the ST School Pocket Money Fund, which my boss chose.

That evening, I had an unusual experience. Ferrying my visiting brother-in-law and his children to Marina Bay Sands to catch the light show over the water, I used the valet parking facility to save time. In my experience I'd never paid less than \$18 each time I valet-parked. Yet, an hour or so later when we returned to claim the vehicle, the attendant looked up and said there would be no charge, mumbling something by way of explanation.

More was to come; later, when I parked the car at home and checked the mail before heading to the flat, I found a letter addressed to my wife from Tan Tock Seng Hospital. In it was a cheque for slightly less than \$3,000.

My domestic helper of long years had undergone surgery at the hospital, which had taken a deposit of \$6,000 from my wife, with a warning that the final bill might go higher. Here they were, refunding almost half the amount!

Strangest of all was another experience some years ago when I was posted to New Delhi by The Straits Times. My son, who had just emerged from the spartan existence of a boarding school, was leaving for Singapore to enter national service. My wife, who was travelling down with him, reported that the lad was rather glum – not because he was apprehensive of NS, but because I had booked them on Jet Airways, which then flew Boeing 737s between the cities.

Economy class on the aircraft tended to be cramped, especially for a tall person like my boy. Why had I not thought of booking on Singapore Airlines or Air India, whose economy sections had slightly more room, she inquired, wondering if I could get him an upgrade.

While I apologised for my thoughtlessness, I demurred. I was reluctant to seek favours, and even if I could afford to pay, it would not have been in the spirit of NS. As a book lover, he could find enough to distract him for the 5½ hour journey. The matter ended there.

That Saturday evening, the family went to a temple in South Delhi to pray for our boy's safety as he prepared for this most significant of rites of passage in a male Singaporean's life. Emerging from the shrine, my eye caught a notice advertising scholarships for needy students. Forty thousand rupees, the equivalent then of \$1,500, would make a significant difference to the lives of five students for a year.

Grateful to God for my son's privilege of education, and remembering the extreme difficulty my own father had faced to put himself through university, I told the temple authorities that while I was not carrying the cash, they would receive a cheque in a day or two.

Two cars left the Velloor household on the morning of Monday, one ferrying my wife and son to the airport, the other headed to the temple with the scholarship money. A couple of hours later my cellphone rang. It was my wife, sounding slightly breathless.

"You are always playing tricks on us," Geetika said happily. "How did you manage to keep such a straight face?"

I responded, truthfully, that I did not know what she was talking about.

Apparently, while entering the aircraft she had been stopped at the door by a stewardess who offered to show her to her seat. Declining the assistance since she knew her way inside the aircraft, Geetika was surprised to be told that the captain had asked for her to be seated in business class.

"Please thank the captain," she responded. "But I am travelling with my son and I would rather sit with him in economy."

A further surprise awaited.

"The captain has also asked for him to be seated in business, ma'am," said the air hostess.

It took me several weeks to convince my family that I had nothing to do with all this. To this day I have no clue to the identity of the kind Jet Airways captain, or why he intervened. The pilot never emerged to introduce himself to them. However, a back of the envelope calculation suggested that the cost of upgrading the pair was roughly equivalent to the 40,000 rupees I had just sent for the scholarship.

Why advertise these anecdotes? I lay no claim to being a compulsive giver. But, this is the month that many companies in Singapore pay out their annual performance bonuses. There are many among us who must surely count themselves blessed, not only for the monetary rewards received but also for having healthy families and children who do not need to flip burgers to top up their siblings' MRT cards.

If you wish to show gratitude, I'd suggest that The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund, located at the News Centre building at 1000 Tote Payoh North, is a worthy avenue. Needless to add, there are plenty of other deserving charities as well in Singapore.

But do consider giving, even if a little. There are lots of the needy out there. Besides, who knows, you might even get it all back one way or the other.

velloor@sph.com.sg



Mr S. Rajaratnam at age 24. He died on Feb 22, 2006, three days shy of his 91st birthday. A state funeral was held for him on Feb 25, 2006.

KIND AND GENTLE MAN

If anyone had met you in person then, he would have been surprised to hear of this fierce streak. In person, you were never intimidating. Your kind and gentle temperament, making everyone around you feel at ease, was truly remarkable.

PROFESSOR KISHORE MAHBUBANI

RUTHLESS REALISM

Your ruthless realism was based on one key principle: never shun away from the truth, even if that truth proves to be painful and inconvenient. There was one point you repeated to us constantly: "Never tell me what you think I want to hear. Always tell me what I ought to hear."

PROF MAHBUBANI



## What's Trending

# Light-hearted video clip hogs Internet and wins hearts in China

## Separately, Canada air traffic controllers' pizza diplomacy finds favour with US counterparts



Ong Hwee Hwee

Digital Editor

Last week, US President Donald Trump ordered burgers and pizzas for a visiting football team, as a partial government shutdown forced White House chefs to stay home without pay.

Air traffic controllers across the United States were also treated to lots of pizzas – but it wasn't Mr Trump who picked up the tab. Over the last week or so, Canadian air traffic controllers have sent hundreds of pizzas to their American counterparts who have been working without pay since the government shutdown began on Dec 22.

Some have dubbed it “pizza diplomacy”.

It all started when staff at an air traffic control centre in Edmonton, Alberta, wanted to do something to show their support for their unpaid counterparts in Anchorage, Alaska, with whom they work closely. They decided that pizzas would be a nice gesture.

The idea took wing, and soon, other Canadian traffic control centres got on board.

Mr Peter Duffey, president of the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association, told CNN: “We wanted to show solidarity with our American colleagues.”

“In the big scheme of things, sending some pizzas to people that are missing pay cheques is a small gesture. But the message that it sends them is a big gesture.”

Inspired by the idea, controllers at the Irish Aviation Authority base also got into the act.

The “cheesy” gesture melted hearts, with US air traffic controllers and other Americans taking to social media to express their gratitude.

“I'm extremely grateful of @CATCA5454 for the extremely kind gesture of buying us pizza while our own government isn't paying us,” wrote Twitter user “Call me Myke”.

“I might have to cheer for a Canadian hockey team (as long as they aren't playing the Coyotes),” he added, referring to the hockey rivalry between the two countries.

Facebook user Michael Cahill commented: “Nothing brings the world closer in a time of despair like pizza!”

Hundreds of thousands of federal workers have been left unpaid as the shutdown, the longest in US history, drags on. About 14,000 air traffic controllers were among those affected,

according to reports.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association filed a lawsuit on Jan 11 against President Trump and other top federal officials, saying they were depriving controllers of their “hard-earned compensation without the requisite due process”.

To help affected workers cope, some businesses have stepped in.

For example, mass transit systems in states like Florida were providing free or cheaper rides for those affected. Some banks and credit unions have also suspended late-payment fees on credit cards, and have offered bridging loans.

Mr Yassin Terou, a Syrian refugee turned restaurant owner in Tennessee who was offering free meals, wrote on Facebook: “We are more than happy to serve them because they have been serving us all these days and we are not going to leave them alone.”

### A CHINESE GRANDPA AND HIS UNUSUAL PEPPA PIG

A grandpa's love. A Chinese family reunion. And a British cartoon pig character with a Chinese twist.

A promotional video for an upcoming animated Peppa Pig movie has become a surprise hit in China, winning the hearts of online users with its bittersweet story.

Co-produced by Alibaba Pictures and British media company Entertainment One, Peppa Celebrates Chinese New Year is scheduled for screening during the Chinese New Year holidays next month.

The promotional clip, released online last Thursday, was an instant hit, attracting more than 330 million views on the Chinese messaging app Weibo in less than two days.

Helmed by Chinese director Zhang Dapeng, the eight-minute video filmed in Hebei province documents a grandpa's quest to find the perfect gift for his city-raised grandson. Humorous yet touching, it highlights issues Chinese viewers could identify with, such as ageing parents left behind in villages when their children seek jobs in the cities.

Called “What is Peiqi?” – the Chinese name for Peppa – the video clip opens with a phone conversation between an elderly man and his grandson.

“You want Peiqi? What is Peiqi?” says the grandpa, after asking the boy what Chinese New Year gift he would like. But before he can probe further, the line goes dead because of poor connection.

So he goes around asking people. A friend tells him “peiqi” is a model. A villager says it is a type of

NATCA New England  
@NATCANewEngland

Follow

Thank you @CATCA5454 for sending our brothers and sisters at Boston Center pizza! We appreciate your support during our #GovernmentShutdown



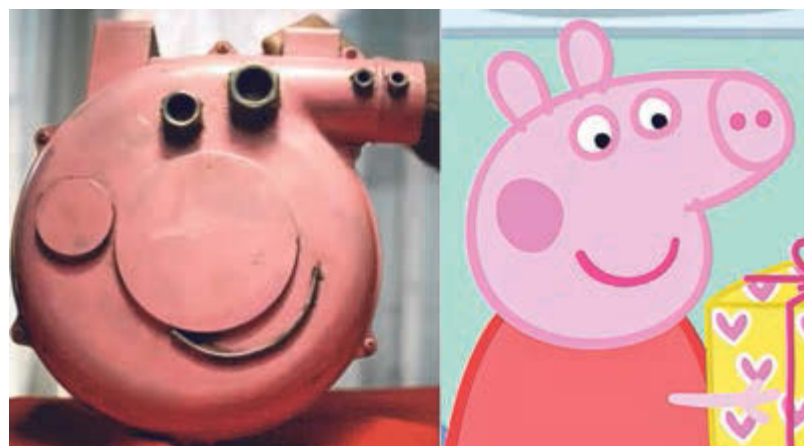
Canadian air controllers have sent hundreds of pizzas to their US counterparts who have been working without pay since a government shutdown began on Dec 22. PHOTO: TWITTER/NATCA NEWENGLAND

### NOTABLE TRENDS

**#10YEARCHALLENGE:** Post a photo of yourself in 2009 next to a photo of yourself in 2019. The social media trend was so viral even Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong joined in the fun.

**TAN CHENG BOCK:** Former People's Action Party MP Tan Cheng Bock, 78, applied to register the Progress Singapore Party last Wednesday. Analysts say this could mean a tough electoral contest in the western part of Singapore at the next general election.

**#PRESIDENTPELOSI:** US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for president? The hashtag was trending on Twitter following a BuzzFeed News report alleging that President Donald Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen had said the US leader directed him to lie to Congress.



A trailer for an animated film on Peppa Pig has become a surprise overnight hit in China. The story of an elderly man's quest to find his grandson a present has touched hearts. PHOTO: YOUTUBE, FACEBOOK/PEPPA PIG

chess game. Another insists it is a shampoo brand.

Finally, a woman who used to work in Beijing comes to the grandfather's rescue. “It is a cartoon character. It looks like this,” she says, pointing to an old ventilation fan she is using to keep the stove fire burning.

When the man finally gets to see his grandson, he unveils his creation: a Peppa Pig lookalike painstakingly welded from parts of a ventilation fan.

The clip made such an impact that stocks tied to Peppa soared in Asia overnight after the video went viral.

Many viewers said they were moved.

A WeChat user wrote: “It's heart wrenching yet heartwarming, seeing how hard the grandpa was trying to keep up with the times and connect with his family.”

As more young people in China move to the cities to work and live, ageing parents often get left behind in the villages, a phenomenon known as liu shou lao ren or “left behind elderly”.

The viral clip is also a comeback of sorts for Peppa Pig. The cartoon series was banned by popular Chinese app Douyin last year, after it was deemed a “subversive” icon for slackers and anti-social young people.

Sharing his thoughts after watching the clip, a WeChat user said: “All I want to do now is to go home and see my parents.”

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## ONLY ONLINE

The week's top 3 picks at [straitstimes.com](http://straitstimes.com)



**VIDEO: Turtles migrate**  
See how the slow-moving creatures from the Live Turtle and Tortoise Museum were moved to their new home.  
[str.sg/seeshells](http://str.sg/seeshells)

**VIDEO: Hangout with ST**  
Topics include the #10YearChallenge and the koi tank built on the steps of a Housing Board flat in Tampines.  
[str.sg/hangout47](http://str.sg/hangout47)

**VIDEO: Cleaning house**  
A professional cleaner shares tips on how to make some dirty household items clean and shiny again.  
[str.sg/cleanup](http://str.sg/cleanup)

# A system men built is destroying them

Monica Hesse

My grandfather is traditionally masculine in most senses of the word: He was a soldier, then a bait-shop owner, then a garbage collector; he rose before dawn most days of his life and I never heard him complain about it. He raised six good kids, he tells funny one-liners, he's an expert fisherman. He once refused over-the-counter pain medication even while at death's door.

I've been thinking about him lately, for reasons I'll get to in a bit.

More than a decade ago, the American Psychological Association (APA) released a set of guidelines for treating women and girls: a document that addressed sexual violence and pay inequality, discussed how women disproportionately suffer from eating disorders and anxiety, and advised clinicians with female clients on how to be more sensitive and more effective. The APA has also, over the years, released guidelines for treating older people, and racial and ethnic minorities, and members of the LGBT community.

What the largest psychological organisation in the United States had never done was release guidelines for treating men.

Men were already seen as the default, not needing individuated study. “Unless you're in a men's group, you're probably not regularly reflecting on what it means to be male,” said Professor Matt Englar-Carlson, who directs the Centre for Boys and Men at California State University, Fullerton. “You're probably just enacting it.”

Psychologists want to change that, though, and this past week marked the release of the APA's inaugural Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Boys and Men – developed over 13 years and using four decades of research.

Men are 3.5 times more likely to die by suicide than women. They have more academic challenges and get harsher punishments at school. They're the victims of 77 per cent of homicides (and they commit 90 per cent of them).

One cause for this consortium of maladies, the guidelines suggested? “Traditional masculinity” itself – the term refers to a Western concept of manliness that relies – and sometimes over-relies – on stoicism, dominance, aggression and competitiveness.

“Everybody has beliefs about how men should behave,” said Dr Ronald Levant, who was the APA president when the guidelines

were initially conceived, and who has worked on them ever since. “We found incredible evidence that the extent to which men strongly endorse those beliefs, it's strongly associated with negative outcomes.” The more men cling to rigid views of masculinity, the more likely they are to be depressed, or disdainful, or lonely.

The guidelines are saying some men are sick, in other words. But are they saying some men are sick, like, we need to gently care for them with aspirin and a thermometer? Or are they saying some men are sick, like, we need to put them in Hannibal Lecter masks and keep them away from everyone else?

Dr Levant was shocked this past week by how many people responded as if the guidelines were suggesting the latter – people who read the 30-page document as an indictment not of rigid, traditional masculinity but of all masculinity, and of men themselves.

Fox News host Laura Ingraham accused the APA of conflating masculinity with “Harvey Weinstein”-like behaviours.

In the conservative National Review magazine, writer David French critiqued the study, saying: “It is interesting that in a world that otherwise teaches boys and girls to

‘be yourself’, that rule often applies to everyone but the ‘traditional’ male who has traditional male impulses and characteristics. Then, they're a problem. Then, they're often deemed toxic.”

I covered a men's rights activist conference a few years ago, where several dozen men – mostly white – talked about how they felt men were under attack. Worse, they said, nobody was paying attention to their suffering.

Some of the men were, as we'd say, “toxic”, (one kept telling me to make him a sandwich, then saying he was joking, then telling me again – ham and cheese on wheat, b--).

But a lot of them were just sad. They talked about male suicide rates, male depression, male isolation. They talked, in other words, about a lot of the information in the new APA guidelines. They were desperate, begging for someone to pay attention and find a solution.

However, most of them were sure the right solution would have something to do with fixing women. As soon as women would stop taking their jobs, they would no longer be depressed. As soon as women would stop categorising sexual attention as harassment, they wouldn't be lonely anymore. These able-bodied straight white men were, as a

group, the most privileged class in America – the Founding Fathers demographic – but they were convinced they were oppressed.

While reading the APA guidelines, I thought a lot about those men at the conference. I thought about how it's possible to be crushed by something you built, how it's possible to invent a game that exhausts you to play.

What's difficult about the APA's guidelines is that they ask us to wrestle with a complicated idea: that in a society in which gender roles have historically been rigid – and that rigidity has placed the lion's share of power in the hands of one of the genders – it's possible for the rulers to be harmed along with the ruled. But that's what bad systems do. They mess up everyone.

I thought about how hard it would be to accept that healing yourself might mean letting go of the very things you believed defined who you were.

Prof Englar-Carlson worked on the APA guidelines for several years. When I talked to him, he kept repeating this point: He didn't believe that men were bad, or even that many forms of masculinity were. “A lot of men have the expectation that they need to be stoic, and independent, and

take care of things on their own – and those can all be quite helpful tools,” he said.

The trouble comes, though, when those are the only tools men believe they have: when they need help and are afraid to ask for it, when they're experiencing emotions they can't even name, much less express. And when they blame themselves for being unable to make those insufficient tools work, and the result is to lash out – or lash in – in violence.

“The guidelines are about, how do we help men live healthier lives?” he said. “How do we help men live lives that aren't trapped in straitjackets of gender expectations?”

All week long, he said, he'd been getting e-mails accusing him of “not liking” traditional men. He told me he wanted to write back: “I do like them! That's why I don't want them to suffer!”

I told him about my grandfather. How much I loved and respected him. How most everyone who met him respected him. How our family stories centred on him being a good provider and a good man. But also – how I couldn't remember anyone asking my grandfather how he felt about that. Whether he would have preferred a different life. Whether he had ever felt trapped in the one he had.

I told Prof Englar-Carlson that I wanted everyone in the world to be like my grandfather. But I also wanted everyone to know they have the option not to be.

WASHINGTON POST



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1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

# OBITUARIES



## CHAN YANG CHIU

Age: 89

passed away peacefully on 18 Jan 2019.  
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

**Husband:** Chia Koh Ching (Deceased)

**Sons:**

Chia Chor Farn  
Chia Chor Yann

**Daughters:**

Chia Ching Hah  
Chia Wing May  
Chia Foong Yong  
Chia Yang Ching

**Grandsons:**

Chia Jin Yu Ian  
Chia Jin Wei Robin  
Chia De Qi Kester

**Granddaughters:**

Chia Yiting Hazel  
Chia Hui Ting Heidi  
Chia Xiu Qi Krystal

Teo Huimin Jane

Chen Shihui Rachel

Dr Chen Shiyun

**Great-Grandson:**

Tong Jun Ming Michael

**Daughters-in-law:**

Chew Lai Choy  
Angeline Ng Chwee Nyuk

**Sons-in-law:**

Teo Chue Sen  
Chen Wan Shooong

**Grandsons-in-law:**

Chow Yong Cheng Jeremy  
Dr Tong Yu Yang Terence

**Great-Granddaughter:**

Tong Xin Lin Sophia

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Blk 38 Sin Ming Drive, #01-545  
(Ang Yew Seng Funeral Parlour) S'pore 575712.  
Cortege will leave on Tuesday, 22 Jan 2019 at 10.00 am  
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2  
for cremation at 11.00 am

"The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want."  
Psalm 23:1



## TAN RUBY

Age: 85

was called home to be with the Lord on 18 Jan 2019.  
Dearly loved and missed by her

**Husband:** Goh Seng Kay (Deceased)

**Children:**

Alan  
Beatrice  
Cecil

**Siblings:**

Tulip  
Una  
Victor

**Grandchildren:**

En-Lin  
EnYi  
Irin  
Daniel  
David

**Spouses:**

Walailak  
Seng Yook  
Ellen

**Spouses:**

Jerry  
Trudie

Nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Blk 31B, Ghim Moh Link, Multi-purpose hall.

Nightly services will be held at 8pm.

Encoffin service will be held on 21 Jan 2019 Monday at 8.10am.

Thereafter cortege will leave at 8.25am for  
Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 9.25am.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6



## Nga Tieng Chieng (TC)

Age: 93 (97)

"I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life"  
(as of 19 January 2019)

Much loved & respected by

Wife: Tham Boon Fah (deceased)

Children: Jeanette, Paul, Julia, Joy (deceased)

& all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at 3 Jalan Pasiran, Singapore 308457.

Nightly services will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Wednesday 23 January 2019 at 11.15am

for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 12.05pm.

No wreaths, please.

Donations will be channelled to

TRAC Lease Renewal Fund.



## Nermal Singh Gagobuha

Age: 64

Husband to Late Amarjit Kaur w/o Nermal Singh

Passed away peacefully on 19 January 2019.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Leaving Behind:

**Daughter:** Mansimranjit Kaur Dhillon

**Son-in-law:** Kirpal Singh

And all relatives and friends.

Cremation will be held on Sunday 20 January 2019

at 6.30pm at Mandai Crematorium Hall 3.

Buses will leave Central Sikh Gurudwara

and Gurudwara Sahib Yishun at 5.30pm.

Akhand Path will be held at Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Hall 2,

from Thursday 24 January 2019

till Saturday 26 January 2019, 4.00pm (Bhog).

## 3rd Anniversary In Loving Memory Of



## NGA BEEN HEN

Home with the Lord

20 Jan 2016

Always loved and remembered by

Cheng Choo

Hui En & Meng Woei

Min En & Kiat Hon

"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life  
and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6



## 1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of

## Lam Tuan Lian

(蓝缙莲)

Departed on

20th January 2018

A year has passed since you left us. A sad but sweet  
remembrance of you brings pain to our hearts.  
With your selfless love you raised us and  
success today we owe you.

Always loved and cherished by:

**Husband:** Albert Hu Yingshi

**Son:**

Nicholas Hu Guoxing

**Daughters:**

Jasmine Hu Yunling

Janice Hu Yunming

**Daughter-in-law:**

Melinda Chong Lin Tein

**Son-in-law:**

Marcus Lam Hock Choon

Grandchildren and all loved ones.

In Loving Memory of...

## Kuek Gim Hong & Gwee Seng Hoon

(20th Jan, 2009) (2nd Feb, 2009)

Your love for us lives forever

in our hearts.

Dearly missed by,

Your children, grandchildren

and great-grandchildren

Anbe Sivam  
Athma Shanti Pooja  
The family of the late



## Palanisamy s/o Veeriah

(Palani / Pandian)

Departed on 6 Jan 2019

wish to express our heartfelt

thanks and appreciation

to all relatives and friends,

for their kind assistance,

attendance, condolences,

donations and wreaths during

our recent bereavement.

**Athma Shanti Pooja**

**will be held on Monday,**

**21 Jan 2019, 7pm at**

**Sri Sivan Temple, 24**

**Geylang East Ave 2,**

**S389752.**

Please treat this as a

personal invitation.

Wife: Rajeshwari

## The Family of the Late



## Annie Wong York Ai

Departed on 13 January 2019

Wishes to express their heartfelt thanks to Fr Robertus,

Serene, the Golden Disciples, choir, communion ministers,

funeral ministers, sacristan and prayer groups of Holy Cross

Church, Fr Jason and prayer groups of Church of St Mary of

the Angels, Dr Vaish with her team and the nurses of

Ward 56 from NUH and relatives and friends for their kind

assistance, prayers, attendance, condolences, contributions

and wreaths during their recent bereavement.

## 3rd Anniversary In Loving Memory Of



## G. VISALATCHI

W/O MARIAPPAN

Departed: 20/01/2016

Dearly missed &

remembered by

children, grandchildren

& loved ones

## 10th Anniversary In Loving Memory Of



## SNG HAI CHWEE

Departed on 20 January 2009

Deeply missed &

always remembered by

loved ones.



## Mahalingam

(Chinna)

Age: 66

Passed away peacefully on

18 January 2019, dearly missed

and remembered by loved ones.

**Late Wife:** Sinnathambi Suseela

**Daughters and Son-in-law:**

Ghayathri

Sakunthala & Ranjeet

**Godson:** Veeraiyah (Raja)

**Grandchildren:** Keshwindran,

Saashana, Puvisha and Pranavel

**Sisters, brothers,**

**all relatives and friends.**

Appa is resting at Block 644

Woodlands Ring Road #03-30,

Singapore 730644. Tel: 9006 8523

Cortege leaves on Sunday

20 January 2019 at 5.30pm for

Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for

cremation at 6.30pm.



## Shantharam Udipi

Age: 72

Passed away peacefully on

18 January 2019, dearly missed

and remembered by loved ones.

**Wife:** Kalavani

**Son & Daughter-in-law:**

Omkar & Chaitra

**Daughter:** Sharika

**Granddaughter:** Taneisha

**And all relatives and friends.**

Papa is resting at Block 461

Jurong West Street 41 #12-660,

Singapore 640461. Tel: 9773 7323

Cortege leaves on Sunday

20 January 2019 at 12.30pm

for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4

for cremation at 2.05pm.



## Parameswaran Devar

s/o Manappan Devar

Age: 63

Passed away peacefully on

19 January 2019, dearly missed

and remembered by loved ones.

**Wife:**

F. Gloria d/o Cannusamy Francis

**Sons & daughters-in-law,**

**daughter & son-in-law,**

**granddaughter,**

**all relatives and friends.**

Appa is resting at Block 715

Yishun Street 71, #05-280,

Singapore 760715.

Cortege leaves on Sunday

20 January 2019 at 5.00pm

for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4

for cremation at 6.30pm.

Tel: 9836 0762 / 8386 4495

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# Invest



## Me & My Money

CEO Kang Beng Hui enjoys investing in businesses where his experience and inputs can be put to good use. **B12**

# New moves to boost financial literacy

More initiatives to ensure Singaporeans have the skills to manage their finances more effectively



**Lorna Tan**

Invest Editor

New initiatives were recently implemented under the national financial education programme, MoneySense, to equip Singaporeans with the skills to manage their finances more effectively.

The Sunday Times highlights these initiatives, which include an online tool and a new programme in schools.

### ONLINE FINANCIAL HEALTH CHECK TOOL

The five-minute Financial Health Check questionnaire, available on the refreshed MoneySense website ([www.moneysense.gov.sg](http://www.moneysense.gov.sg)), lets you

assess your financial health, identify gaps and take steps to plug them.

The topics include money management, insurance, investment, and retirement and estate planning.

In addition, you will receive customised recommendations with practical steps to help you improve your financial health and address the gaps.

There is an option allowing you to download a full report with all relevant recommendations.

For example, if you want to improve your saving habits, you can take part in the Pledge to Stash initiative.

This is a commitment to save before you spend by setting up a recurring transfer to automatically direct funds into a dedicated savings account each month.

The questionnaire can be taken regularly to ensure that you stay on track.

You can also access “starter packs” on the website that make money matters simple and identify weak areas to improve your financial health.

### A FINANCIAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

This is a mandatory module to equip young Singaporeans with a strong foundation in financial skills.

All Year 1 polytechnic and Institute of Technical Education (ITE) students will now be taught a mandatory module on financial literacy.

Through this ungraded programme, they will learn budgeting, goal setting and financial basics such as the effect of compound interest on debt and savings.

The decision to implement the module follows a successful pilot last year in which about 7,000 Year 1 polytechnic and ITE students were involved.

The pilot focused on reinforcing good money-management habits such as saving before spending, budgeting and understanding how compound interest could either help or hinder investments or debt. Students also better understood their financial personalities.

Additional financial education curriculum modules will be piloted with selected Year 2 and 3 students over the next few years, to help them be more savvy consumers, and understand how insurance, investments and national schemes

### About MoneySense

MoneySense was set up in 2003 as the nation’s financial education programme. It aims to help Singaporeans manage their money well, and make sound financial decisions on their own.

Through its free activities and programmes, the service tries to make money matters simple and intuitive for all Singaporeans.

Beyond resources published on the MoneySense website and social media, its Institute for Financial Literacy runs talks and workshops at workplaces

(such as Central Provident Fund) can help to meet their needs when they step into the workforce.

### ENHANCED SERVICES AT KEY GOVERNMENT TOUCHPOINTS

The objective is to help Singaporeans better understand their options and make the right financial decisions at key life milestones.

For instance, HDB will provide more information for home buyers

and for the public. These cover a wide range of financial planning topics to help participants understand their needs and make informed choices when deciding on the suitability of products.

It also works with schools on financial education activities and workshops for their students.

You are encouraged to join its mailing list and have access to updates on Facebook ([moneysense](https://www.facebook.com/moneysense_sg)) and Instagram ([@moneysense\\_sg](https://www.instagram.com/moneysense_sg)).

stand the schemes and to plan ahead. More services along these lines will be provided to help Singaporeans make better choices at key life milestones.

### MONEYSense ANNUAL CAMPAIGN AND ROADSHOWS

The MoneySense annual financial education campaign, which started last November, ends next month. The roadshows bring together various government and industry partners to create a one-stop source for all areas of financial planning.

The focus of this year’s campaign is to encourage Singaporeans to take the MoneySense Health Check as a first step to improving their financial well-being.

People are encouraged to attend the MoneySense roadshows island-wide and find out how to put the Health Check recommendations into action and learn about the various aspects of financial planning.

Complimentary one-to-one clinics are also available for those who would like more detailed discussions on their Health Check recommendations. The next roadshow will be on Jan 26 and 27, 11am to 6pm, at Kampung Admiralty.

[lornatan@sph.com.sg](mailto:lornatan@sph.com.sg)

## Taking steps towards upgrading investing knowledge

### CHOR CHOON PIN, 25

Auditor at a top accounting firm

Investing remains something of a mystery to auditor Chor Choon Pin even though he works in the financial field for a top firm.

He lives with his parents, who are both still working, and spends most of his weekends at the gym and hanging out with friends.

He has not started investing due to a lack of financial know-how, but he is keen to start – if only he knew where.

Mr Chor found the way forward when he attended a financial health clinic at a MoneySense roadshow at Toa Payoh HDB Hub last month.

He learnt about financial goal setting, the importance of having a rainy-day fund and different types of investments.

Mr Chor – who considers himself a saver – made a “pledge” to build up his savings diligently.

He admits he has not been disciplined in monitoring his savings, but he has now set up an automatic transfer of \$1,000 each month from his salary to another account.

“There are many useful resources and articles on the MoneySense website. I plan to constantly upgrade my financial know-how by following MoneySense on social media and reading financial articles,” he says.

Auditor Chor Choon Pin learnt about financial goal setting and different investments, among other things, at a MoneySense clinic. PHOTO: MONETARY AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE



After attending a financial health clinic, human resources professional Tiffany Lim plans to explore safer investment options like the Singapore Savings Bond. She also intends to buy critical illness cover soon. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

### TIFFANY LIM, 24

Human resources associate at a social media firm

Starting work on a double degree in accounting and business from Nanyang Technological University in 2017 has not stopped human resources professional Tiffany Lim from saving regularly.

She keeps two bank accounts and has set up an automatic transfer so that a certain portion of her monthly pay goes into a separate account.

This helps her to segregate expenses from savings.

But Ms Lim knows this alone is not enough to fund her financial goals.

She wants to invest wisely and make her savings work harder after setting aside sufficient funds for her living expenses, hospitalisation plan and parents’ allowance.

She took a step towards upgrading her investing knowledge by going to a financial health clinic at the MoneySense roadshow at Toa Payoh HDB Hub last month.

Financial consultant Frederick Chan advised her on a wide spectrum of investment tools, from Singapore Savings Bonds to fixed deposits to stocks that she could consider, depending on her risk profile.

“I’m quite risk-averse,” says Ms Lim.

“I plan to explore safer investment options like the Singapore Savings Bond after attending the financial health clinic. I will continue to research on investments to gain a better understanding and make an informed choice.

“I also plan to buy critical illness cover soon.”

**Lorna Tan**

## Financial planning can be better, poll finds

While Singapore residents are generally good savers and practise budgeting, there is much room for improvement, according to a new survey.

The poll of about 2,800 Singapore residents was commissioned by the MoneySense Council and

conducted in late 2017 by Nielsen Singapore.

### MONEY HABITS AND FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Singapore residents generally have good money habits and most are sat-

isfied with their financial circumstances. About 60 per cent saved regularly and a similar proportion had a budget and tracked daily spending.

It also noted that 60 per cent felt that their overall financial situation was at least average, while 30 per cent said it was good.

Some, however, needed a bit more help. About 25 per cent believed that “one should live for the moment, instead of planning for the future”.

They were less likely to save regularly, have a budget and keep track of their spending. They were also

more likely to use credit to buy big-ticket items.

### FINANCIAL PLANNING AND GOALS

Singapore residents need to be more proactive in working towards their financial goals.

Only 60 per cent have started planning for future financial needs. About 20 per cent felt that they would need to plan only when they are looking to retire.

There were several common misconceptions that prevented people from actively planning ahead.

For instance, about 30 per cent of

those aged 30 to 59 had not starting planning for future financial needs and cited “having not enough money to start financial planning” as the most common reason.

Half of working adults aged 17 to 29 had not started, “thinking that it was too early”.

The impression that a lot of spare cash is needed to do financial planning was also a commonly held perception.

This was seen across different age groups, regardless of whether they have started their financial planning or not.

Among those who have not started planning, slightly more than 25 per cent stated that they did not know where or how to start.

### FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE

Singapore residents understand basic financial literacy concepts, such as inflation, but can do better in understanding compounding and investment concepts.

Less than 20 per cent felt that their knowledge of investment was good.

**Lorna Tan**





Dr Heah Sieu Min, chief executive of HC Surgical Specialists, says it is important for a healthcare provider to focus more on ageing care, and for the elderly to undergo routine health screening for colorectal cancer. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

TakingStockOfStocks

# Endoscopy services in the heartland

In this monthly series, The Sunday Times and the Singapore Exchange's research team interview company bosses to help investors get a better look at a firm's operations, one that goes beyond the financials



Lorna Tan

Invest Editor

HC Surgical Specialists (HCSS) is a medical services group primarily engaged in providing endoscopic procedures, including gastroscopies and colonoscopies.

It also offers general surgery services with a focus on colorectal procedures at clinics across Singapore.

The firm, which listed on the Catalyst board in November 2016, aims to expand in the heartland, develop the range of medical services it provides, and build its regional

presence. Executive director and chief executive Heah Sieu Min, 55, discusses the business side of the group and its growth plans.

**Q** How did HCSS come about? How has it evolved since its inception?

**A** While HCSS was incorporated in 2015, its history can be traced back to almost a decade ago when the founders, Dr Chia Kok Hoong and myself, established our respective private practices. Recognising early the strong growth potential of endoscopic medicine, we started to specialise in this field – bringing in both experienced and young talented specialists along the way.

HCSS has a team of six specialists offering endoscopic procedures and general surgery services with a focus on colorectal procedures, and a team of five general practitioners (GPs), with a network of 16 clinics across Singapore

as of the end of financial year 2018.

**Q** How does HCSS differentiate itself from competitors?

**A** One feature is our heartland clinics. Unlike other private practices, which are typically concentrated in places like Mount Elizabeth and Orchard Road, HCSS has made a conscious endeavour to set up nine endoscopy centres in the heartland.

This not only adheres to HCSS' motto of offering quality healthcare at your doorstep, but is also good business sense – endoscopy centres in residential areas tend to have wider catchment with less competition (as there are no other private practices) and cheaper rentals, which can translate into more affordable prices for patients.

All the nine endoscopy centres are Medisave-accredited, and are on the panel of most major insurance companies. Most are strategically located close to restructured hospitals – Tampines, Bukit Batok, Ghim Moh, Sengkang, D'Leedon and Hillford condominiums.

These provide "doorstep" endoscopy services at affordable prices and often after-office hours for the convenience of patients. HCSS will continue to look for opportunities to expand into farther reaches of Singapore's heartland.

Also, over the years, we have established a robust medical support programme aimed at developing our group of specialists. This includes GPs and our recently spun-off associated company, Medinex.

Together, the medical support platform provides both a steady stream of patient referrals for our specialists (through our GPs) and pharmaceutical services to HCSS.

**Q** Why invest in HCSS?

**A** Just like why we decided to specialise in endoscopic procedures initially (given the lack of a credible substitute for the service and an ageing population that should yield consistent demand), at HCSS, we

are looking at sustainable long-term growth.

Our strategy has always been to identify young and talented specialists at an early stage and groom them – from helping them set up their clinics to patient referrals.

This not only allows HCSS to enjoy the full growth potential of a rising "superstar" specialist, but also reduces the financial risk exposure due to a lower acquisition price.

Typically, buying only a 51 per cent interest in the clinics of our young specialists, with an arrangement to take the remaining 49 per cent stake a few years later at a higher price-earnings ratio, not only motivates our young specialists to work hard in ramping up their clinical performance for a better acquisition price, but also gives HCSS an opportunity to share in the upside of potentially value accretive acquisitions in the future years.

In summation, our medical support platform (Medinex and GPs) is a treasured asset that is scalable across different specialities. The generic nature of the platform not only furnishes us with the network to expand across specialities, but the tangible support it provides (in the course of patient referrals and operational support) can also help draw in young talented specialists.

**Q** In your view, what are some of the healthcare trends that we should take note of?

**A** Healthcare needs have been escalating over the past year, given the ageing demographic and the trend towards smaller nuclear families – meaning higher healthcare spending, especially with more elderly people suffering from chronic ailments.

We believe this will continue to be an issue faced by Singapore in the next few decades. It is thus important as a healthcare provider to focus more on ageing care. It is crucial for the elderly to undergo routine health screening for colorectal

**Our strategy has always been to identify young and talented specialists at an early stage and groom them – from helping them set up their clinics to patient referrals. This not only allows HCSS to enjoy the full growth potential of a rising "superstar" specialist, but also reduces the financial risk exposure due to a lower acquisition price.**

cancer, which is one of the top ailments in Singapore due to sedentary lifestyles and dietary habits.

**Q** Looking forward, what can we expect from HCSS?

**A** With healthcare, especially colorectal cancer, being an increasing concern for the population, HCSS will continue to strengthen its core competencies to provide good service to all our patients.

Our associated company, Medinex, recently debuted on the Catalyst board, as it tries to further expand its operations, and we look forward to using its network and platform for mutual welfare.

We will continue to pursue opportunities to keep up with evolving markets, optimising our corporate strategy of creating long-term value for our shareholders. This includes collaborative opportunities with other surgical specialists who will complement and contribute to our present medical team.

At the same time, we will continue to pursue suitable partners in order to expand regionally.

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Block 1 in Toa Payoh Lorong 7, one of the oldest blocks of HDB flats in Singapore, is a likely candidate for Vers, which, when rolled out in 20 years' time, will give owners of older flats some peace of mind as it will help to boost liquidity for homes with decaying leases. Freehold for HDB flats is out of the question but "freehold with strings attached" might be a feasible option, says the writer. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

# Is there a more permanent solution than Vers for HDB flats?

How about having freehold units with buyback clause at end of 99 years?



Christine Li

**In the case of Vers, it is apparent that most sites will not have very high redevelopment potential, and flat owners should not expect a "windfall", unlike in the case of Sers or in the private collective sale market. Another issue is the threshold of home owners required to vote in favour of Vers for it to go ahead.**

The Voluntary Early Redevelopment Scheme (Vers) that will allow home owners to vote on whether to sell their Housing Board flats to the Government once the leases on the apartments near their end was arguably the most significant policy announced last year.

Vers provides owners of older HDB flats some peace of mind as it will help to boost liquidity for homes with decaying leases.

But as it will not be rolled out until 20 years later, and with details yet to be unveiled by the Government, there are lingering concerns over Vers in terms of the payout and execution.

What is clear is that it will be different from the Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme (Sers), where the Government identifies selected HDB blocks or precincts with high

redevelopment value and takes them back for redevelopment.

Home owners subjected to such a compulsory acquisition get duly compensated and a new flat with a fresh 99-year lease in a nearby location.

In the case of Vers, it is apparent that most sites will not have very high redevelopment potential, and flat owners should not expect a "windfall", unlike in the case of Sers or in the private collective sale market.

Another issue is the threshold of home owners required to vote in favour of Vers for it to go ahead.

A 100 per cent vote threshold – as favoured by some – will make it too prohibitive for Vers to take place, given the large number of residents in any HDB precinct.

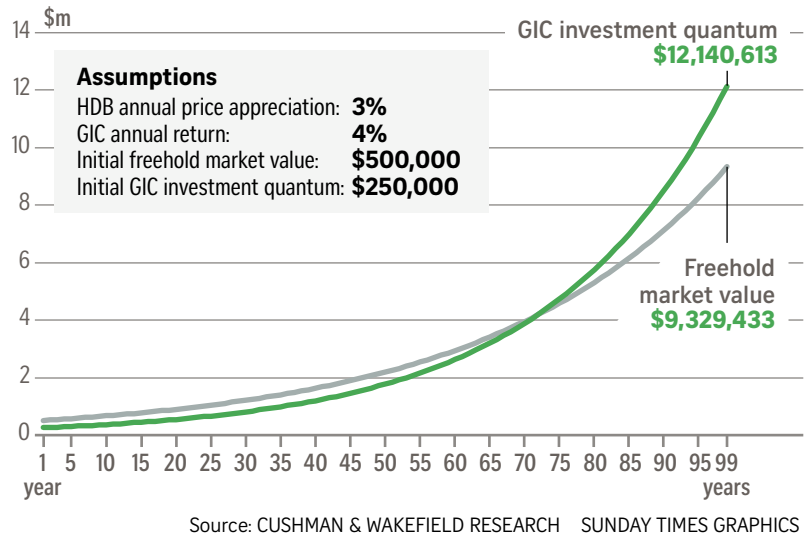
But if the consensus requirement is below 100 per cent, we are bound to see tensions between neighbours whichever way the result goes, a scenario we have already witnessed in the private collective sale market where the threshold is 80 per cent.

At this juncture, Vers is probably still the best stop-gap option to preserve the market value for existing 99-year leasehold flats, but I believe we can have a more permanent solution for future Build-To-Order (BTO) flats to tackle the decaying lease issue.

In announcing Vers at last year's National Day Rally, Prime Minister

## How they compare

Freehold HDB with Embedded Call Option flats versus GIC investment over 99 years



Lee Hsien Loong explained why the HDB cannot sell flats on freehold tenure.

In such a scenario, flats will be bequeathed to home owners' descendants in perpetuity. Over time, our society will be split into property owners and those who cannot afford a property. The Government will also have limited options to

take back the freehold flats for redevelopment and Singapore will run out of land for future generations.

Freehold HDB flats is a no-go, but what about selling a freehold HDB flat with strings attached?

## FREEHOLD HDB FLATS WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

For example, the Government could

launch a new scheme to sell Freehold HDB flats with an Embedded Call Option (Feco) to allow a buy-back clause at the end of 99 years.

Let me elaborate.

Feco flats give the Government the right, but not the obligation, to acquire them back any time after 99 years by paying the freehold market value.

In practice, the Government will always acquire Feco flats at the end of the 99th year. This will serve the same purpose as the current 99-year BTO flats, where leases run out and flats are returned to the state at the end of the lease term.

Feco flats will also be priced slightly higher to account for the freehold tenure.

Using the Singapore Land Authority's leasehold table as a guide, the freehold value will be about 4.2 per cent higher than the value of current BTO flats sold under a 99-year leasehold tenure.

Feco flats will still be highly subsidised as it has always been the Government's intention to make public housing affordable for the masses.

The Government will then inject the full sum received from Feco sales into GIC to be invested. After a holding period of 99 years, GIC will have accumulated enough reserves for the Government to pay for the acquisition of the flats. This scheme is like how our Central Provident Fund has worked for our retirement needs.

Historically, annual price appreciation of HDB flats averages 2.8 per cent, based on holding periods ranging from five to 25 years. GIC, on the other hand, has achieved annualised returns ranging between 4.3 and 5.7 per cent, also based on holding periods ranging from five to 20 years.

Let us assume a new Feco flat with a market value of \$500,000 is sold today at a subsidised rate of \$250,000. Based on an assumption of a 3 per cent historical appreciation of the HDB flat and a 4 per cent annualised return on the GIC investment portfolio, at the end of 99 years, the initial investment quantum of \$250,000 would have ballooned to \$12.1 million.

This will exceed the freehold market value of the flat at \$9.3 million. The financials are made feasible due to the extremely long investment horizon of 99 years. Is a 4 per cent annualised return too optimistic?

No, if you consider that the current floor interest rate for the CPF Special Account is also 4 per cent.

## HOW DOES THIS SCHEME COMPARE WITH 99-YEAR LEASEHOLD BTO FLATS?

Feco flats will have the benefit of preserving the resale and market value of older flats since they are still deemed freehold. This is very much in line with the Government's asset enhancement policy.

The call option will allow the Government to acquire HDB flats to make way for future generations' housing needs if the population continues to grow. It is also self-funded by the return from the sovereign wealth fund, which eliminates the strain on the Government's budget.

Most importantly, it minimises the risk of having social divisiveness due to voting.

For the Feco scheme to work, GIC's annualised return must exceed the HDB's annual price appreciation in the long run.

This can be achieved as the Government has much control over the price appreciation of HDB flats through supply and demand side measures to ensure the sustainability of the property market. Additional stress tests may be needed to ensure the scheme can withstand external shocks during a financial crisis.

• The writer is the senior director and head of research for Singapore at property consultancy Cushman & Wakefield.

# Chinese insurance firm eyes regional growth, wealth management

Siow Li Sen

The significant market in Singapore for savings, retirement and protection products that is being driven by increasing wealth in the region has prompted China Taiping Insurance Singapore to start a life insurance unit here.

The company, which is owned by China's fourth-largest life insurer, received its licence from the Monetary Authority of Singapore last August to undertake life and general insurance business.

The firm was originally the Tai Ping Insurance Singapore Branch, which was established here in 1938 to do general insurance business, mainly in motor, construction and marine insurance.

Its parent company is a Chinese state-owned entity that listed on

the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 2000 with total assets of 600 billion yuan (\$812 billion), said Mr Yang Yamei, general manager of China Taiping Insurance Singapore.

Following an injection of \$40 million to support the life insurance business last year, the Singapore firm has a paid-up capital of about \$120 million, he added.

Taiping Singapore will be the firm's strategic gateway for Southeast Asia and it is in the midst of establishing a digilab here, he said.

Singapore also offers good access to the region and offshore clients, noted Mr Lance Tay, its general manager for life insurance.

In 2016, there were 2.6 million millionaires in the Asia-Pacific, excluding Japan, with 110,000 in Singapore, according to a Capgemini wealth report. It said the total

wealth of these millionaires in the region was estimated to be US\$11.8 trillion (\$816 trillion) with cash making up 21 per cent or about \$2.3 trillion.

"Demand for quality protection and wealth management solutions is underpinned by strong wealth creation and the rapidly ageing population in Singapore," said Mr Tay.

This surge in demand is attributed to the country's changing demographics, he added. The proportion of the population aged 60 and above increased to 23 per cent last year and has more than doubled since 2000.

The trend is expected to continue with this senior group making up 38 per cent of the population by 2050.

In 30 years, with decreasing birth rates and improving life expectancy, Singapore will have more

people in the older age groups than in younger ones.

Mr Tay also said savings are growing at a slower rate than gross national income. Official data showed that from 2010 to 2017, gross national income grew 35 per cent, faster than the 25 per cent for gross national saving in the same period.

A 2014 survey by DBS Bank showed that many Singaporeans aged 18 to 29 are saving late and not enough.

China Taiping will start its life insurance business here with two products and distribute them via financial advisory firms, banks and international brokers. The two products are savings plans for the short to medium term.

The firm has about 140 staff in Singapore, with 40 in the life team.

lisen@sph.com.sg



Mr Yang Yamei (left), general manager of China Taiping Insurance Singapore, and Mr Lance Tay, general manager for life insurance, at the inauguration of the company's life insurance business. PHOTO: CHINA TAIPING INSURANCE SINGAPORE





Investors at a brokerage house in Shanghai last September. While most markets are projected to generate single-digit corporate earnings growth, the Chinese market, as measured by the CSI 300, is projected to see earnings growth of 14.9 per cent this year. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Volatility ahead: Risks and opportunities

Risks will remain this year, but they will also throw out interesting opportunities



Carmen Lee

With great power comes great responsibility, as the saying goes. Similarly, with high volatility widely projected for this year, does this come with more opportunities?

There has been a slew of uncertain events so far this year. The list includes the longest US government shutdown, lingering trade tensions affecting corporates, the looming shadow of Brexit, American dollar weakness, concerns over China's slowing growth, potential cuts in investments and capital expenditures, and possible declines in corporate earnings.

With the murky outlook, even superhero Aquaman would have problems navigating through the obstacles ahead. It is clearly not going to be smooth sailing this year and risks and volatility will remain.

Equities bore the brunt of selling last year – the MSCI World Index was down 10.4 per cent, while the MSCI Emerging Markets Index saw a steeper decline of 16.6 per cent.

China was one of the worst-performing markets with the Shanghai Shenzhen CSI 300 Index falling 25.3 per cent. As the trade war between China and the United States escalated, selling pressure picked up steam in the last quarter of 2018.

Several key economic indicators in China, including the Purchasing Managers' Index, have pointed to slower growth ahead. The International Monetary Fund also cut its world growth projection for this year, citing the impact from trade tensions.

With the muted outlook, growth expectations have been adjusted down. The economic impact from full-blown trade tariffs on Chinese goods could bring China's growth down by up to 1 percentage point.

In terms of corporate earnings, coming from the high base last year when US corporates benefited from tax cuts, earnings growth for S&P 500 companies are expected to come off to around 7 per cent for this year, based on Bloomberg's analyst consensus.

This is similar to the earnings growth projected for Singapore's Straits Times Index (STI) companies, where growth is projected at 6.5 per cent. The Hang Seng Index companies are projected to see earnings growth of 8.7 per cent this year.

While most markets are projected to generate single-digit corporate earnings growth, the Chinese market, as measured by the CSI 300, is projected to see earnings growth of 14.9 per cent this year.

On the back of the sell-down last

year, equities entered the early part of this year with gains. Most major equity indices are up about 4 to 5 per cent so far this year, with the STI at 4.95 per cent. Chinese stocks have also enjoyed the New Year rally and posted gains of about 5 per cent, while the S&P500 is up around 5.1 per cent.

Still, while Asia enjoyed strong growth in recent years and there was a clear preference for growth companies over value ones, the tone is likely to change this year. With the cautious sentiment, our preference is for value over growth stocks.

In Singapore, the defensive core blue chips have weathered several major economic up-cycles and down-cycles and have long business track records, healthy balance sheets, established management teams and stable business and earnings. With the uncertainty ahead, Singapore's defensive and high-dividend-yielding stocks should form part of a diversified portfolio.

Outside of Singapore, we believe that there are also opportunities in the rest of the regional markets. With the sharp correction last year, most regional markets are trading at less than one standard deviation from historical averages in terms of price-earnings ratio. Historically, when markets traded at these levels, they also threw up good opportunities to selectively bargain hunt for value stocks, especially for the medium- to longer-term and value investors.

As an illustration, the last two occasions when markets slipped to around this same level were during the global financial crisis a decade ago and during the devaluation of the yuan in 2016. Since then, equities have rallied and enjoyed several years of good gains.

While volatility remains and sentiment will be impacted, there are some positives. These include current low oil prices, full employment, low credit defaults, no major cuts in capital expenditures, no cuts in investments, healthy and steady dividend payout, and low valuations.

Equity valuations are now low versus historical levels for both price-earnings and price-book ratios. Dividend yields are also healthy at current price levels.

For example, the STI is currently trading at 12.3 times earnings and 1.1 times book value with an estimated dividend yield of 4.2 per cent.

As a comparison, the STI's historical 10-year average in terms of price-earnings ratio is 13.5 times and price-book ratio is 1.3 times. In other regional markets, the average dividend yield is 3.9 per cent for the Hang Seng Index stocks and 3.2 per cent for the CSI 300 stocks.

In China, some stimulus measures have already been introduced, including corporate tax cuts for small businesses as well as the cut in the required reserve ratio. The Chinese government has in recent days confirmed more measures this year to support the economy.

In Singapore, share buyback activities picked up during the lows in 2018 and we expect that after the impending results season in the

fourth quarter of last year, buybacks should pick up again. Earnings expectations have already been moderated and there were no major cuts in dividend payouts or capital expenditures.

The market will be watching the fourth quarter of 2018 results for management guidance for the 2019 outlook and dividend payout.

For this year, we favour value over growth stocks and have several key investment themes: defensive, dividends and digital.

In the defensive segment, we like

Keppel DC Reit, NetLink NBN Trust, Singtel and ST Engineering. For dividend plays and Reits, we like Frasers Centrepoint Trust, Frasers Logistics & Industrial, Keppel DC Reit again and Mapletree North Asia Commercial Trust.

In the digital space, mega trends in mobile payments, mobile and Internet applications, unique content and e-commerce are likely to remain in focus for the medium to longer term. The current price weakness is an opportune time to selectively buy into companies that are

able to ride these mega trends.

So, is it a case of risks without opportunities or risks and opportunities? We tend to think it is the latter. Risks will remain this year, but they will also throw out interesting opportunities.

As Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg says: "In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks."

• The writer is head of OCBC investment research.

In the digital space, mega trends in mobile payments, mobile and Internet applications, unique content and e-commerce are likely to remain in focus for the medium to longer term. The current price weakness is an opportune time to selectively buy into companies that are able to ride these mega trends.

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Me&MyMoney

# Walking the talk to boost consumer financial know-how

CEO's self-help insurance portal aims to spur customers to take ownership of personal finances



Lorna Tan

Invest Editor

Mr Kang Beng Hui believes in the importance of consumer financial literacy and he walks the talk.

In 2016, the chief executive of RAF Holdings and senior partner at Ray Alliance Financial Advisers helped his firm set up insurance portal FinAlly.sg with \$200,000.

Through facilitating self-help insurance buying, the portal aims to equip consumers with some financial know-how to enable them to make better decisions.

“Money is like water, essential and in abundance everywhere. But you have to work hard and get it for yourself. Even if you don’t have a lot of it now, remember that it is out there for anyone who is willing to work hard and smart for it,” he said.

Mr Kang, 46, grew up in a four-room HDB flat. He has four siblings and recalls living simply and thriftily with his father, a carpenter, and mother, a housewife.

He graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 1997 with a bachelor’s degree in arts and social sciences, majoring in economics and Japanese studies. Prior to joining Ray Alliance in 2004, he was a tied agent from 1993 to 2004 at Great Eastern Life, John Hancock Life and AIA.

Mr Kang’s wife, who is Japanese, is a human resource professional with a sports brand, and they have two sons, aged 14 and 16.

**Q** What’s the next stage of growth for your businesses?

**A** In the financial advisory and distribution industry, we see tremendous growth potential in the integration of traditional and online business models. With FinAlly.sg, our self-help insurance portal, we incentivise customers to take ownership of their personal finances by offering rebates, and continual and relevant product offerings such as inexpensive fund portfolios and a spectrum of competitive insurance packages. We also provide a growing number of salaried adviser support staff to help them process their inquiries at low or no cost.

We plan to integrate the offline and online businesses so that we are able to take a more holistic approach to serve our clients. We will also be increasing the number of insurance plans and categories such as general insurance. We will continue to develop more user-centric tools. There are plans to expand the footprint of FinAlly beyond the Singapore market.

**Q** What’s in your portfolio?

**A** I invest monthly into a discretionary managed fund portfolio and a self-constructed fund portfolio. Additionally, I maintain an equity portfolio that consists of US, Hong Kong and Singapore blue chips and real estate investment trusts.



RAF Holdings chief executive Kang Beng Hui sees tremendous growth potential in the integration of traditional and online business models in the financial advisory and distribution industry, and says there are plans to expand the footprint of the FinAlly.sg self-help insurance portal beyond the Singapore market. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

## Worst and best bets

**Q** What has been your biggest investing mistake?

**A** I bought a property in the late 1990s for \$630,000 and had to sell it 10 years later when the property market was poor. I lost about 10 per cent in that deal.

I must be one of the few in Singapore who lost money from buying a Singapore property! The timing was bad. I didn’t have enough to hold on to the property, so I sold it when I needed liquidity. I had no choice but to bite the bullet and take the loss.

**Q** And your best investment?

**A** My best investment would probably be Bakerzin, in which I invested \$30,000 in my late 20s.

The profit wasn’t anything to shout about but the learning from that investment is just invaluable.

From managing contractors to engaging investors, I got to learn all the nuts and bolts of running a business. All that has helped me tremendously in all my business operations and dealings so far.

In financial terms, Nature One Dairy is a very good investment for me. It’s a dairy manufacturing company based in Melbourne but has since expanded to Singapore and China. It has grown more than 50 per cent per annum since it first started.

Lorna Tan

I also enjoy investing in businesses where my experience and inputs can be put to good use. But more importantly, investing in businesses is a way for me to meet and work with capable people whom I can learn so much from.

FinAlly.sg is a natural digital extension of my insurance business, so I’m very excited to see it take off and grow. Nature One Dairy, a Melbourne-based milk product manufacturing company, is another company that I have invested in as I see potential growth in it.

For real estate, my partner and I have a small investment company that develops Australian land.

I have 25 per cent in funds and equity investments, about 25 per cent in property and about 50 per cent in all my businesses.

I’ve seen annual returns of about 6 per cent from my funds and equi-

ties, 15 per cent from my property investments, and over 50 per cent for the stronger business investments.

**Q** What are your immediate investment plans?

**A** In 2019, I’m looking to consolidate and streamline my property and business investments to allocate resources to my core businesses such as FinAlly.sg. I also want to increase my liquid asset holdings.

Long term, I’m going to continue investing in myself in the areas of personal education and improvement. Pursuing an executive MBA has always been on my list. Beyond just a degree, it’s an opportunity to meet and understand how people from other industries and different nationalities think culturally and how they go about solving problems, particularly in their field. All of these

are so fascinating to me.

**Q** How did you get interested in investing?

**A** I started off as an insurance agent with Great Eastern when I was an undergraduate at NUS in 1993. I made some money and an army mate asked me to invest in a unit trust fund. I allocated \$20,000 of my earnings that year for it. It was a very good start but I eventually found this mode of investing rather passive.

When I was in my 20s, I was invited to invest in an F&B start-up, Bakerzin. That was definitely a good move – in terms of learning as I have learnt so much from the venture.

And while the industries may vary, sound business values and principles will apply in whatever sector you are engaged in. It has helped me tremendously in my future business operations and dealings.

**Q** Describe your investing strategy.

**A** Admittedly, I’m not the best stock-picker, so I’d really rather invest directly in businesses and have some involvement steering its direction. Having said that, I still set aside a monthly sum to invest in blue-chip stocks and funds, which are relatively safe.

Some examples of my stocks include DBS, OCBC, Keppel, CapitaLand, Citibank, Oracle, AT&T, Vanguard S&P 500.

**Q** What else is in your financial plan?

**A** I have two school-going boys, aged 14 and 16, so I’ve invested with their education journey in mind too. I’m planning to pay only half of their tertiary school fees and living expenses, and will make sure they equip themselves with strong financial literacy to be savvy enough to make up for the other half required.

WORK HARD AND SMART

**Money is like water, essential and in abundance everywhere. But you have to work hard and get it for yourself. Even if you don’t have a lot of it now, remember that it is out there for anyone who is willing to work hard and smart for it.**



**MR KANG BENG HUI**, chief executive of RAF Holdings and senior partner at Ray Alliance Financial Advisers.

**Q** How are you planning for retirement?

**A** In many ways, the definition of “retirement” suggests an overeagerness to completely stop working because you hate what you do. That’s definitely not the case for me.

I’ve enjoyed my career trajectory and all the experiences I’ve had because of it. I will probably slow down a little in my 70s but I’m not looking to stop work completely.

My business partner-cum-mentor is in his mid-60s and is still going strong physically and mentally. I hope that when I’m at his age, I will be just like him!

**Q** Home is now...

**A** I live in a 1,500 sq ft three-bedroom maisonette in Bukit Batok.

**Q** I drive...

**A** A white Audi Q5.

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FinancialQuotient

## What are bonds?

Zhang Weina

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Bonds are one class of financial assets that provide periodic coupon payment throughout the life of the bonds. The face value of bonds will be returned to the in-

vestors at maturity.

Investors can purchase bonds either from the exchange directly or from some intermediaries, such as brokerage houses or specialised bond trading platforms.

Issuers of bonds can be governments, government agencies, corporates and financial institutions.

The denomination can be either in local currencies or in popular ones, such as the United States dollar, euro or Japanese yen. In Singapore, bond investors are exempted from tax on the coupon payment received.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Bonds offer several benefits to investors. First, they provide reasonable diversification benefits to enhance the returns if investors hold both bonds and stocks. This is because stocks and bonds are usually not highly correlated and the combination of the two assets would reduce the risk without compromising investment returns.

Hence, for buy-and-hold investors, bonds can be a reasonable financial asset in addition to stocks.

Second, bonds offer predictable income for investors who demand regular payment from their investment. This type of payout structure is preferred by retirees who need regular cash payouts. Dividends from stocks can be more unpredictable and volatile than coupons.

Third, bonds are safer than stocks if investors are more risk-averse. This is represented by lower volatility in the price fluctuation of bonds compared with that of stocks. Among different types of bonds,

government bonds in Singapore are among the safest financial assets in the world.

Undoubtedly, lower risk is also accompanied by lower return. For example, the benchmark 10-year Singapore Government Bond (with maturity on May 1, 2028) has a coupon rate of 2.625 per cent. Its daily price volatility has been at 0.77 per cent since issuance in May last year.

In comparison, the total return for individual stocks ranged from minus 36.3 per cent to 15.1 per cent from January to October last year.

Nevertheless, bonds are much less liquid than stocks in Singapore as the vast majority of bonds are traded

over the counter (that is, not on the Singapore Exchange). If liquidity is a concern for investors, they should set a cap on how much capital to put into bonds.

IF YOU WANT TO USE THE TERM, JUST SAY:

“Bonds offer good diversification benefits for investment return enhancement and stable income for those investors who prefer a more balanced portfolio.”

• The writer is a senior lecturer at the Department of Finance at the National University of Singapore Business School.



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Live more,  
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# Zero waste

The Sunday Times' guide to the eco lifestyle



Is eco-friendly more expensive? [Melissa Heng](#) does the sums C6 • 10-day eco warrior [John Lui](#) lives to tell C9 • How to thrift like a pro: [Olivia Ho](#) opens up her closet C10&11 • Waste not: [Hedy Khoo](#) cooks up a feast with skins, bones, roots C18&19

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## The 8Rs of zero waste

### RETHINK

Take time to reassess your daily consumption patterns. Are you careless about the way you throw rubbish away? Are you creating unnecessary rubbish because of the way you consume?

### REFUSE

One of the easiest things you can do to reduce waste is to simply say no. Refuse single-use disposables such as plastic straws, cutlery, coffee cups and styrofoam takeaway boxes. Saying "no" also extends to things such as junk mail and promotional freebies such as pens, tissue packets and post-its. By not taking these non-necessities in the first place, nothing needs to be thrown away.

### REDUCE

Be clear about what you need and do not need. When shopping, focus on necessary purchases and forgo impulse buys. Work on reducing your consumption of water, electricity and meat.

### REUSE

Instead of constantly replacing old items with new ones, look for ways to reuse them. Old clothes that are beyond repair can be made into rags for cleaning, while glass jars can be cleaned and used to store other things. Breathe new life into your wardrobe by participating in clothing swaps with friends.

### REPURPOSE

Repurposing takes reusing to another level by adding a touch of do-it-yourself into the mix. Rather than breaking down the material, repurposing – or upcycling – is about adding to the original product to create something useful and maybe even of a higher value. For example, you can repair a broken table, sand it down and paint it in a bright colour to create a "new" table.

### RECYCLE

In the zero-waste movement, recycling is often considered the last resort as the process is quite energy-intensive. Only when you are unable to refuse, reduce, reuse and repurpose should recycling be an option. When sorting out plastic, metal and glass, ensure they are clean, dry and free from food contamination before putting them in the recycling bin.

### REPLANT

Living a zero-waste lifestyle means using everything that is usable for as long as possible. If you have a garden, try replanting seeds from fruit you would normally throw away. You can also grow fresh herbs such as basil near a window or on a balcony, or vegetables such as onions, garlic, lettuce and spring onions in a large pot.

### ROT

Take advantage of nature's decomposition process to turn kitchen scraps into compost. A simple indoor vermicomposting set-up uses worms to turn nut shells, vegetable scraps, eggshells, tea leaves and coffee grounds into a nutrient-rich soil-like compost that is great for fertilising plants. A well-controlled vermicompost should smell faintly of hay and fresh earth. Cooked food, meat and dairy require a more complicated set-up and take a much longer time to compost.

# ZERO-WASTE WARRIORS

How do you lead a zero-waste life? The Sunday Times finds out from a gardening enthusiast, reusables proponent and eco-friendly parents



Michelle Ng

An ambitious but hopeful goal was set by Environment and Water Resources Minister Masagos Zulkifli a week ago when he launched Singapore's Year Towards Zero Waste.

The year-long campaign aims to raise awareness of waste issues in Singapore and highlight the need for Singaporeans to consciously treasure resources and play their part in protecting the environment. After all, the numbers are startling. Singapore's only landfill, Semakau, is projected to run out of space by 2035. Domestic recycling rates have hovered at a low 20 per cent for the past few years. Supermarkets here give out two million plastic bags a day and only 2 per cent of them are recycled.

But a growing movement could stem the tide. Zero waste is a concept that aims to send nothing to a landfill by continually reusing and regenerating resources in what is known as a circular economy. Once practised by a niche group,

more people are now aspiring to a zero-waste lifestyle.

Ms Pek Hai Lin, manager of non-profit group Zero Waste SG, says it is heartening to see the movement gaining traction with the public.

"Hopefully, it will go beyond just a trend and people can engage with the concept of zero waste on a more intimate and personal level in the long run," the 31-year-old adds. She says the key to successfully transitioning to a zero- or low-waste lifestyle is a mindset shift on how people consume in their daily lives.

"We need to look beyond the illusion of abundance, which is ubiquitous in Singapore, and see the larger issue of resource scarcity. The first thing someone can do is to keep an open mind," she adds.

The Sunday Times speaks to three eco-conscious individuals who have made significant adjustments to move towards a zero-waste lifestyle.

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Civil servant Ong Chun Yeow at his small garden plot at the rooftop of a carpark near his home in Yishun. He grows edible greens and also composts to make his own fertiliser. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

## He rarely buys vegetables or pays for electricity



Once a week, civil servant Ong Chun Yeow walks a couple of blocks to harvest vegetables for his dinners that week.

In a 1m by 4m raised garden bed on the rooftop of a multi-storey carpark in Yishun, the 42-year-old grows manioc, ulam raja, butterfly pea plant and Malabar spinach, among other edible greens.

He also takes with him a small tub of organic waste, mainly consisting of vegetable scraps from his meals, to add to his compost bin. Over time, the waste breaks down into a nutrient-rich organic fertiliser for use in his garden.

"I believe that if we take from the Earth, we need to give back," says the bachelor.

To ensure his food waste can be turned into compost easily, Mr Ong follows mainly a plant-based diet as

composting meat requires a more complicated set-up and takes a much longer time.

He won the small garden plot through a ballot in 2016 in the neighbourhood's Community in Bloom initiative shortly after moving into his three-room Housing Board flat. Setting it up cost him \$500 in materials and he had to pay a refundable deposit to the National Parks Board for the space.

He changes the plants every 1½ months, letting the ground rest for two weeks between harvest and planting. He opts to grow only edible plants, both in his garden plot and in pots outside his flat. He learnt to garden with Edible Garden City, an urban farming social enterprise.

"Since I work predominantly in a tech-based environment, gardening is my way of connecting back with nature," he says. His day-to-day work includes doing research on cultural heritage in Singapore.

Another way Mr Ong lowers his impact on the Earth is by reducing his use of water and electricity so as not to put unnecessary pressure on natural resources.

His water and electricity use is so low – it is a third of the national average – that the utility rebate he receives is usually enough to cover his bills.

"It's about changing the mindset – you can wash your dishes with a full blast of water from the tap, or you can choose to turn it down to a trickle and you can still wash the dishes just fine," he says.

He believes adopting a circular economy approach – in which resources are recycled and regenerated endlessly – is the best way to minimise his impact on the environment.

He notes that it is a myth to think one can "throw away" trash.

"It takes a lot of effort to live in an eco-friendly way because you're going against the norm. And the

It's about changing the mindset – you can wash your dishes with a full blast of water from the tap, or you can choose to turn it down to a trickle and you can still wash the dishes just fine.



CIVIL SERVANT ONG CHUN YEOW

wonderful thing about convenience is that once something is out of sight, it's out of mind," he says. "But nothing is actually thrown away. It all goes somewhere on this planet."

To inspire people to live a more eco-friendly lifestyle, he regularly conducts monthly workshops in his free time on what is called ecological literacy.

He teaches people about their plastic consumption in a bid to shift away from the conventional "buy and throw away" mindset and suggests small changes to live a low-waste lifestyle.

His next project is to create "eco bricks" by stuffing clean, dry soft plastics such as food wrappers and fabric scraps into empty bottles he collects from a friend. These solidly packed bottles can be stuck together to make modular pieces that can be stacked and arranged into furniture such as a stool or a table.

Last year, he created an art piece

out of hundreds of eco bricks and exhibited it at eco-conscious festival Green Is The New Black.

But he says making eco bricks can be a double-edged sword.

"I don't want people to think that because you can make eco bricks out of plastic, you don't have to cut down on plastic use."

Mr Ong acknowledges it is an uphill task to make more people aware of the impact their lifestyles are having on the environment.

Even for himself, the more knowledge he gains, the more he feels he has to do better in his daily life.

But he stays optimistic and rooted by being active in various burgeoning green communities, such as Journey To Zero Waste Life in Singapore, a Facebook group with more than 9,000 members.

"Ultimately, it boils down to personal choice and belief. I have to be positive about what I'm doing and how it will create an impact in the long run," he says.



Ms Khee Shihui with the reusable daily essentials in her bag, including a cup, lunchbox, produce bag and even mini ice cream spoons. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI



"How much of a difference can one person make?"

That was the pointed remark from an acquaintance when project consultant Khee Shihui started carrying around a reusable container, coffee cup and utensils in 2017.

She had made a personal commitment to cut down on single-use disposables, such as styrofoam boxes, paper coffee cups and plastic forks and spoons, in her life.

Instead of feeling discouraged, the question got her thinking. "The person had a point. When you're just one person trying to make a change, you can feel quite helpless because you don't know exactly how much impact on the environment you can make as an individual," says the 36-year-old.

So she decided to keep count of how much waste one person can save simply by using one's own containers and cutlery.

And as it turns out, one person can make quite a difference. Her tally on the number of single-use disposables she avoided for the whole of last year was 246 plastic straws, 199 paper and styrofoam cups and 420 pieces of single-use utensils, among other items.

What she cut down on using most were single-use bags. Using a tote bag meant she avoided using 438 plastic bags and 62 paper bags.

The number surprised her as she is a moderate grocery shopper who shops for herself and her husband only occasionally.

"I cannot imagine how many plastic bags would be used once and thrown away if you are shopping for a family," she says.

She has documented her eco-friendly journey on her Instagram account @tabaogirl since starting the project on Jan last year.

These days, the reusable daily essentials in her bag also include a silicone bag for her favourite bubble tea, a produce bag for groceries, a handkerchief instead of tissues and mini ice cream spoons.

An aeronautical engineer by training, Ms Khee says evidence-driven decision-making is compelling. She now works for a social enterprise.

Through her year-long project, she hopes to steer the "bring your own" conversation she has with friends, family and strangers into something that is verifiable and tangible.

"When people argue, it's often about opinions. But you can't fight numbers and data – these are unbiased. We can then have a meaningful conversation about how an individual's actions can make a difference," she says.

She emphasised the need for a change in the status quo in which single-use items are ingrained. "I remember a time when bread did not come in its own plastic bag, but now it's the norm. No one questions why it has to be wrapped in a

### DISPOSABLES SHE AVOIDED IN 2018

246

Plastic straws

199

Paper and styrofoam cups

420

Single-use utensils

438

Plastic bags

plastic bag," she says.

"Disposables are so common these days that if you don't slow down to notice, you won't think twice about taking that plastic straw or extra plastic bag."

As a recreational diver and lover of marine life, Ms Khee has always been aware of the negative effects of human actions on the environment.

But it was not until May 2017, when she read an article about the irreparable damage caused by global warming to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, that she decided a lifestyle change was in order.

"It was a sobering thought that

something as old as the Great Barrier Reef could be destroyed in just our lifetime. I had to ask myself, 'what could I do?'" she says.

She is mindful not to impose her lifestyle on others as changing one's habits has to be a personal choice, she says.

Instead, what she will do is bring enough plates and cutlery from her home to social gatherings where disposables are used and offer them to her friends as an alternative.

At one company event, she collected used plastic water bottles to recycle them.

"I'm just helping people to see the possibilities of choice and extending an invitation," she says.

For her wedding in May last year, she requested Bettr Barista, a mobile coffee service, to serve her guests coffee in reusable ceramic mugs and glassware instead of the usual paper coffee cup. She spent a few hundred dollars more for the extra logistics involved.

Ms Khee acknowledges that some people might think it is a restrictive and impractical way of living. But she says she has a newfound appreciation of what she owns and eats.

"Because I am very careful and intentional about the things I consume, I find great pleasure whenever I indulge – even if it's just bubble tea or ice cream," she says.

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\*Limited to 1 redemption per shopper per day.

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28 Jan – 10 Feb 2019 | 10pm – 9pm | L1 Jem Atrium

Be enthralled by the mystical world of How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World. Simply spend \$30\* in a single receipt to ride with Toothless for 30 seconds and bring home a photo and a 15-second video as keepsake. Remember to catch the movie in Cathay Cinemas at Jem on 31 Jan.

\*Double spending required for FairPrice Xtra members.

How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World © 2019 DreamWorks Animation LLC. All Rights Reserved.

### Rousing Rhythm

2 Feb 2019 | 1pm & 5pm | L1 Fountain Area

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### Peak Performances

2 & 9 Feb 2019 | 6pm | L1 Fountain Area

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- Eu Yan Sang Fair | Today
- FairPrice Xtra CNY Goodies Fair | 28 Jan – 3 Feb 2019

Terms & Conditions apply: A maximum of three (3) same-day receipts. Redemption is on a first-come-first-served basis. All redemptions are available at L3 Concourse desk only (last redemption at 9.45pm) unless otherwise stated. Redemption must be made on the same day as purchase. Other Terms & Conditions apply. Information correct at time of print.

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FROM C3



Ms Liu Wen Hsin and Mr Marcus Lowe are raising their two-year-old son Spencer with washable cloth diapers and second-hand toys. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

## Old clothes and toys for this boy



Michelle Ng

Stay-at-home mum Liu Wen Hsin keeps a spreadsheet of the exact number of toys her two-year-old son, Spencer, has in his playroom. There are 52, of which 32 are in play. The rest, which are not as age-appropriate, are kept in storage and will be swapped with the existing ones when he gets older.

In the spreadsheet, Ms Liu, 30, also notes where and when she bought the toy and its price, or whether it was a gift. She also has a wish list of toys to get in the future, and does the same for books. The main reason she does this is to ensure she does not buy too many of the same type of toys. She also encourages her friends and family to check with her before giving Spencer toys to prevent duplicates.

“I’d rather not have too many of the same toys because some might get forgotten and it is wasteful,” she says. Keeping track of her son’s toys is one way she avoids unnecessary purchases that will go to waste and end up in a landfill. She has no qualms about buying second-hand toys as well, such as high-quality wooden ones, rather than spend on cheap plastic playthings.

Other items she gets second-hand are cloth diapers, which she cleans and sanitises before use. Ms Liu and her husband Marcus Lowe, 31, a compliance manager at a bank, decided early on to go for reusable diapers as disposable ones are not environment-friendly.

According to the United States-based Real Diaper Association, it takes hundreds of years for a disposable diaper to decompose in the landfill.

The couple started using cloth diapers along with disposable diapers when Spencer was two weeks old and fully transitioned to using them after a week. Ms Liu washes the used diapers in a single load in the washing machine.

Modern cloth diapers come in colourful designs, with prices starting at \$8 for a basic one to over \$40 for a high-end one.

Ms Liu estimates she has 30 cloth diapers in rotation, all of which are adjustable in size and have been used since Spencer was born. She says she will continue to use them until he is potty-trained, which usually happens around the age of three.

By their calculations, they had recovered the costs of the cloth diapers when he turned a year old.

They also use cloth diapers when they go out and keep the used ones in a wet bag to take home to wash.

“It may seem very inconvenient to carry around cloth diapers, but it’s the long-term impact on the environment we’re thinking about,” says Ms Liu.

The only time they use disposable diapers is when the family goes overseas.

To cut wastage even further, the

I'd rather not have too many of the same toys because some might get forgotten and it is wasteful.



MS LIU WEN HSIN on keeping a spreadsheet of the toys her son Spencer has so she does not buy too many of the same type

couple use cloth wipes instead of disposable wet wipes to clean Spencer’s bottom when changing diapers. He also wears only clothes given as gifts or hand-me-downs. Ms Liu has purchased just three outfits for him since he was born.

They also prefer not to use tissues and kitchen towels in their home, opting for handkerchiefs and cloth rags instead.

Ms Liu says the only baby-related product she will not take second-hand is a child safety seat as the integrity of a used car seat could be compromised.

Having studied and worked in Sydney, Australia, for eight years prior to having Spencer, where the zero-waste movement caught on earlier, the couple were already actively reducing waste in their daily lives.

But it was only in 2017, after Ms Liu joined the Facebook group Journey To Zero Waste Life In Singapore, which has more than 9,000 members, that she ramped up her zero-waste efforts.

“I wasn’t aware of how much more I could do in my home until I joined the community and saw all the other ways people were reducing their waste. I knew I had to do something,” she says.

Now, she uses solely “eco enzymes” – a fermented solution made with fruit peel, sugar and water – to clean her home and has swapped bottled body-care products for bar soap and bar shampoo.

These days, the main bulk of the trash the family produces revolves around dried-goods packaging as Ms Liu bakes frequently and uses a large amount of flour and oats. In an effort to reduce the amount of packaging she throws away, she buys the biggest package available.

The couple say the main reason they choose to live in a low-waste manner is to take care of the Earth, something that is in line with their Christian beliefs.

“It’s the general sense of taking care of the environment and what we’ve been given. We can all do more by making small changes in our homes and day-to-day lives,” says Ms Liu.

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# Do natural cleaners work?

The Sunday Times puts soap nuts, tea seed powder and vodka to the test



Jan Lee



Conventional household cleaning products contain chemicals which can be harmful to the body and environment.

But while natural and homemade cleaners are safer and more eco-friendly, are they up to the task of scrubbing out dirt and grime?

The Sunday Times puts three all-natural cleaners to the test:

### SOAP NUTS

These fruit of the Sapindus family of trees, which are native to warm temperate and tropical regions, contain saponins that have soap-like properties and are commonly used as laundry detergent.

You can make soap-nut liquid by soaking 15 soap nuts in one litre of water overnight. About 200ml of liquid is suitable for one load of laundry. Alternatively, throw in six to eight nuts tied in a small muslin bag with an average load of laundry.

For this test, I soaked four soap nuts in warm water for 15 minutes. The seller I bought the nuts from said this would help release the soapy qualities faster. I then tossed the nuts in a muslin bag together with the warm water into the washing machine. My laundry load consisted of a T-shirt, a pair of shorts and three dishcloths. One dishcloth had stains from soya sauce, black vinegar and Tabasco sauce.

The nuts got out the soya sauce and vinegar stains after a short wash, but the Tabasco mark remained.

**Verdict:** Good enough for daily washing, but not strong enough for stubborn stains.

**Buy it from:** I got the soap nuts (\$23 for 500g) from [www.thediyscrs.com](http://www.thediyscrs.com)

### TEA SEED POWDER

Also known as camellia seed powder, tea seed powder is the residue left after extracting camellia seed oil. The empty seeds, which contain saponins, can be ground into powder and used for cleaning.

I made a solution for dishwashing by mixing a tablespoon of powder into a small bowl of water.

I soaked a sponge in the brownish solution and scrubbed three oily dishes that were used to serve braised chicken and steamed fish.

For each dish, I had to dip the sponge into the solution only once before it became grease-free. The residue was easily rinsed off.

Tea seed powder is also said to be good for washing fruit, vegetables and clothes, cleaning greasy surfaces and even as a shampoo.

One downside is the powder has to be used in three months once opened or it will turn rancid. And once mixed with water, it cannot be kept for later use.

**Verdict:** Wonderful for cleaning dishes, but its short shelf life may lead to wastage.

**Buy it from:** I got a pack (\$4.90 for 1kg) by Yes Natural from online grocer RedMart ([redmart.com](http://redmart.com))

### VODKA

Vodka is a mainstay of cocktails, but it can also be used for cleaning due to its strong alcohol content.

I mixed an equal amount of vodka and water to use as a multipurpose cleaner. It worked extremely well on surfaces such as glass.

On mirrors, the solution dissipated quickly. It did not leave streaks or an odour like vinegar, a well-known cleaning agent. It also got rid of water stains on a glass tabletop.

Vodka is also said to be effective in cleaning off sticky residue and soap scum and polishing chrome and porcelain fixtures.

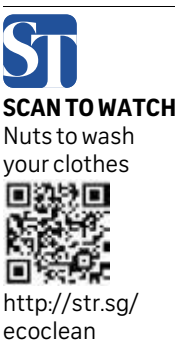
**Verdict:** A good alternative for those who do not like the smell of vinegar, but it is a pricey cleaning agent.

**Buy it from:** Major supermarkets and convenience stores

[janlee@sph.com.sg](mailto:janlee@sph.com.sg)



(From left) Soap nuts can be used as laundry detergent, tea seed powder for washing dishes and vodka for cleaning surfaces. ST PHOTOS: JOSEPH CHUA



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# Eco-friendly and economical?



The Sunday Times zooms in on eight common household items and compares the cost and convenience of switching to environment-friendly options



Melissa Heng



**Make-up wipes, \$8 to \$12 (for a pack of 25)**  
Various brands are available at supermarkets and personal-care stores such as Watsons and Guardian.

**Make Up Eraser, \$30, available at Sephora**  
This reusable cloth is made of a woven polyester blend.

Used damp with warm water, it can remove even waterproof make-up and lasts up to 1,000 washes.

**Cost comparison**  
If washed daily, the Make Up Eraser would last almost three years. Using one make-up wipe a day for three years would cost about \$438.



**Tungsten halogen bulb (right), about \$4**  
These incandescent bulbs are the least energy-efficient option. Each bulb lasts about 2,000 hours.

**Compact fluorescent lamp (CFL, above), \$5 to \$7, and LED bulb, \$5 to \$10**  
CFL bulbs consume about a



third of the electric power of incandescent bulbs. Each lamp lasts about 8,000 hours. LED bulbs use about half the amount of electric power of CFLs and have a lifespan of about 15,000 hours.

**Cost comparison**  
The total bulb purchase and electricity cost for 15,000 hours of light output for an LED bulb is about \$26 and, for a CFL, about \$48. In comparison, an incandescent bulb would cost about \$182.



**Plastic zipper bags, about \$4 for 50 pieces**  
These lightweight sealable plastic bags can be cleaned and reused, but are too flimsy for long-term use. They are typically used once or twice before being disposed.

**Cost comparison**  
If used for six years, a reusable snack bag would cost about \$2.80 a year. If you use one disposable bag a day for a year, it would cost \$29.20.



**Reusable snack bag, \$13.90 to \$16.90, available at department stores Tangs and Robinsons, and online at neishaus.com.sg**

Made of cotton and polyester with a recyclable plastic inner lining, these reusable bags and wraps can hold snacks such as sandwiches, biscuits and fruit. They can be rinsed with soap and water and last six to eight years.



**Aluminium foil, \$3.80 to \$4.20, various brands from supermarkets**

**If You Care recycled extra-strong aluminium foil, \$7.90, available at RedMart**  
The production of recycled aluminium foil uses 95 per cent less energy than

traditional foil-manufacturing processes and creates less waste since there is no need to mine for new metal.

**Cost comparison**  
If you use six boxes of aluminium foil a year, regular foil would cost about \$24 while recycled foil would cost \$47.40.

**Cartridge razor, \$15 to \$20 for the razor handle, \$16 to \$30 for a pack of four cartridges**

While the razor's plastic handles can be reused, the cartridges have to be replaced after five to 10 shaves.

**Safety razor, \$46 to \$150 for a razor handle, \$4 to \$12 for 10 razor blades, available at men's grooming salons such as The Panic Room and Splice Barbershop**  
Safety razor handles are typically made of steel or a chromed zinc alloy and can last a lifetime. The stainless steel razor blades are recyclable and should be replaced after six to seven shaves. Safety razors are said to cause less skin irritation, shave bumps and ingrown hair.



**Cost comparison**  
Using disposable razors would mean spending about \$156 a year on plastic cartridges alone. Though the initial cost of buying a safety razor might be high, they last for a long time and the razor blades would cost about \$20 a year.



**Disposable diapers (left), 30 to 40 cents a piece, various brands from supermarkets**

**Cloth diapers, \$10 to \$40 a diaper, available at department stores and mother-and-baby boutiques such as Bumwear and MooMooKow**

Cloth diapers come in a range of designs, typically including inserts or layers, which are usually made of absorbent materials such as cotton or microfibre. They



can be machine-washed and last anywhere between eight months and two years. Some reusable diapers are adjustable in size and can be used up to age three.

**Cost comparison**  
Using cloth diapers can cost about \$300 a year. Using disposable diapers would cost about \$1,000 a year.



**Cling wrap, \$2.40 to \$4.20, various brands from supermarkets**  
These thin plastic sheets are typically for one-time use.

**Silicone lids, \$15.50 to \$27.50, available at Redmart**

The silicone lid comes in varying sizes and can cover bowls ranging from 133mm to 353mm in diameter. The lid creates an airtight seal to ensure freshness and can withstand temperatures

ranging from minus 40 deg C to 90 deg C. It can be washed and reused.

**Cost comparison**  
Using six boxes of cling wrap a year would cost about \$20. Buying four lids of different sizes would cost \$85, but they can be used for many years.



**Kitchen cleaner, \$4 to \$5 for 500ml, various brands from supermarkets**

**Homemade kitchen cleaner, \$2 to \$3 for 500ml (depending on the ingredients)**  
Mix a cup of distilled white vinegar with a cup of water. You can add a few drops of essential oil to make the mix more fragrant. Vinegar is a natural disinfectant and can cut through grease and grime. The mix can be used to clean kitchen surfaces such as stove tops, tables and counters.

**Cost comparison**  
Using a homemade kitchen cleaner would save you \$1 to \$2 for every 500ml used.



Successful ageing



The functional screening made Mr Leo more aware of his oral health and the need for regular check-ups.  
PHOTO: TED CHEN

# Something to smile about

Project Silver Screen helps seniors like Mr Leo Boh Suan improve their oral health so they can have a better quality of life well into their golden years

Jac Woo

After working in the Public Utilities Board for 45 years, retiree Leo Boh Suan, 82, is happy to lead a peaceful life.

He recalls: “I started working there when I was 16. I didn’t have much education then but with on-the-job training, I progressed from doing meter repairs to engine operations.”

Mr Leo lives with his 78-year-old wife in Ang Mo Kio. They have no children and spend their days pursuing diverse interests.

“My wife has many friends and is always busy going out with them. I prefer to stay at home and watch television. I usually go out for breakfast and to buy takeaway meals to eat at home. We seldom cook,” he says.

Three months ago, Silver Generation (SG) Ambassadors came knocking on the couple’s door. These are volunteers who visit seniors to educate them on the various healthcare services and active ageing schemes available, such as the Project Silver Screen (PSS) functional screening programme.

Under this, senior citizens can get their vision, hearing and oral health checked at subsidised rates at various convenient venues.

“I don’t usually go for health screenings

but since they asked, I agreed,” says Mr Leo.

His only regular screenings are for his eyes — he visits Tan Tock Seng Hospital for annual check-ups after undergoing cataract surgery on both eyes about 10 years ago.

“I can see quite well. I wear reading glasses only when I have to read small print,” he says.

Mr Leo and his wife went to the functional screening at the Lions Befrienders Senior Activity Centre at Ang Mo Kio last November.

At the screening, he was informed that he had dental issues and was advised to go to a dentist for a follow-up.

Mr Leo says he has been wearing a full set of dentures for more than 10 years and was not aware that he had dental issues.

“I always thought that one needs to see a dentist only when one has a toothache,” he says.

“I had full dentures made when I was in my 70s. That was the only time I ever saw a dentist. So far, I have no problems eating.”

Like Mr Leo, many seniors feel that if they do not feel any pain, everything is fine. Most of them will also brush off any vision, hearing or dental issues as they are “old-age problems, can’t help it”. Some will also avoid check-ups because they are concerned about the cost.

But thanks to the PSS functional screening programme, senior citizens can enjoy check-ups and follow-up treatments at subsidised rates. When a person’s basic daily functions — such as seeing, hearing and eating — are in good shape, it is so much easier to age happily.

In Mr Leo’s case, the functional screening made him more aware of the need for regular check-ups and offered solutions to improve his oral health.

May every senior citizen in this food-loving nation live well into their golden years and get to say: “I have no problems eating.”

This series is an initiative under the Action Plan for Successful Ageing.

I don’t usually go for health screenings but since they asked, I agreed.



MR LEO BOH SUAN, 82

## GET SCREENED EARLY

### WHAT:

- Project Silver Screen (PSS) offers functional screening for hearing, eyesight and oral health at subsidised rates to Singapore citizens aged 60 and above.
- It is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Temasek Foundation Cares and the business community.

### HOW MUCH:

- Free for Pioneer Generation card holders, \$2 for Community Health Assist Scheme card holders, \$5 for all other Singapore citizens.
- If you require follow-up treatment, you will be referred to the relevant healthcare services.
- Need-based subsidies are available for all treatments. You may also receive PSS vouchers of between \$15 and \$200 if you require aids such as spectacles, hearing aids and dentures.

### WHERE AND WHEN:

- For more information and functional screening schedules, visit [www.projectsilverscreen.sg](http://www.projectsilverscreen.sg) or call the Singapore Silver Line on 1800-650-6060 (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 8.30pm, and Saturday: 8.30am to 4pm, excluding public holidays).



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Ms Ann Gee co-founded Live Love Luna, an online store specialising in reusable menstrual products such as menstrual cups (left). ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

# Let's talk about menstrual cups



Clara Lock

Disposable sanitary pads are touted to be quick drying, ultra absorbent and gentle on the skin, but whenever Ms Kristine Wong used them, she would get rashes on her privates by day two of her period. She switched to reusable pads last year, a gentler alternative that no longer causes itching and rashes. Reusable pads are made from cotton or flannel and secured to the gusset of the underwear by snap buttons rather than adhesives.

The 24-year-old, who is a navigating officer in the merchant navy, says: "I read some articles online and learnt that commercial pads use bleached cotton and adhesive chemicals."

"I thought, if I'm going to use that on my sensitive area every month, there's going to be some impact on my body in the long run."

She is among a growing number of women who have turned to reusable menstrual products such as pads, period underwear and menstrual cups over the past few years.

Menstrual cups are small cups that are inserted into the cervix, where they collect blood for up to 12 hours.

Ms Ann Gee, co-founder of Live Love Luna, an online store specialising in reusable menstrual products, says her revenue doubled from 2016 to 2017 and increased by another 25 per cent last year.

Among her products, menstrual cups are the most popular – she sold about 1,000 last year – followed by period panties and pads.

The website also sells reusable tampons made from sea sponges, a niche product that less than 10 customers have purchased.

Ms Ann attributes the growth to more awareness and information on alternatives, as well as more open and frank discussion about menstrual health these days.

United States-based company Thinx, which was founded in 2014 and popularised a hashtag of the same name, has gathered more than 6,500 posts of women doing

sports, dancing and going to the beach in their period panties.

In Singapore, conversations about menstrual health are also gaining steam.

In 2016, the same year she started the online store, Ms Ann created a Facebook group called Reusable Menstrual Products Asia to encourage women to review menstrual products and exchange tips on, for example, how to remove stains from menstrual cups.

She screens all newcomers to the closed group, which has about 900 members.

She says: "We want to create open discussion on the topic of menstruation, without any feelings of embarrassment, awkwardness and shame."

"The group is a safe space where people can talk about their bodies, such as their heavy flow or cervix, and know that nobody is judging."

The 26-year-old also holds public talks at The Green Collective, a store in Tanjong Katong that sells eco-friendly products, to educate people on how to select, use and maintain

various menstrual products.

For instance, she teaches customers how to measure the height of their cervix to determine if they should buy a menstrual cup with a longer or shorter stem.

She also provides cup samples from different brands so they can feel the material.

While most menstrual cups are made from medical grade silicone, some are softer and more pliable. "Buying menstrual products involves a lot of word of mouth because these are things you usually won't buy on impulse – you'll research and ask your friends about them instead," she says.

Ms Daphne Loo, who uses the menstrual cup and period panties, is one such advocate who has spread the word to many.

When the personal trainer used tampons in the past, her flow was so heavy it would saturate a maximum-absorbency tampon within three hours.

Now, she can wear a menstrual cup for six or seven hours before

needing to empty it. She wears period panties to absorb urinary leakage that sometimes occurs while doing heavy lifts and squats during her period, when her bladder is more sensitive.

She says: "I've never talked about periods so much until I started using a menstrual cup and period undies."

"As women, all of us have to deal with periods so when we find something that makes life easier, we want to share it."

Beyond comfort and convenience, reusable products also help cut down on plastic waste.

"I'm a diver, so it really concerns me when I see so much plastic in the environment and in the sea," says the 35-year-old.

These women agree that periods are a natural part of life they have no qualms discussing.

"Menstruation is part of creating life, it is something to be accepted, even celebrated," Ms Ann adds.

More women are turning to reusable menstrual products and want to shed the shame that comes with discussing menstruation

posable pads costs about \$6 and lasts her for two months, adding up to \$36 a year.

While newbies may shy away from the hassle of repeated washing, those who use reusable menstrual products have devised their own ways to keep things fresh.

Marketing executive Louiza Wong, 25, washes her menstrual cup with a liquid cleanser made for that purpose, while sales manager Ms Miwa Someya, 40, rinses out stained disposable pads before washing them with a cold cycle in the washing machine.

Meanwhile, yoga teacher Kathy Gabriel, 26, adds a drop or two of eucalyptus oil on the corners of the pad before putting it on, to make sure it smells clean.

"Put it in here," I would tell the checkout person at the supermarket, handing her a fetching canvas tote bag and peeking to see if anyone in the queue noticed that there was a hero in their midst.

In the last four years, companies handing out media kits have almost all opted for fabric bags over paper. They used to sit in a sad pile. This

week, they found their purpose.

Once, I was in the food aisle grabbing oranges when, without thinking, I ripped two plastic bags off the roll. These were discreetly tucked into a corner in the hope the next person would not mind using pre-torn bags.

It was a bit strange seeing fruit loll about loosely in a tote bag, but it is not a big deal unless you are the type who hates to see your groceries mingling and getting to know each other.

On day five, it occurred to me that when I go strawless in my restaurant drink, I am not actually removing a straw from the landfill or incinerator. It is merely moving one person over, to someone not as enlightened as me.

The thought made me want to weep, but it was not worth the rummage for a wipe inside a bag with half my kitchen in it.

It was not all small gestures, however. I have a laptop, purchased in 2013, with a dying battery inside and I was ready to banish it to the cupboard where all dead electronics go.

In the spirit of zero waste, I really should put the broken things into recycling, but each item sparks joy, if joy is the aching remembrance of happiness locked in an irretrievable and ever-receding past as one stands here in a state of disconsolate ennui. That is a lot to invest in a blender that has not worked since 2013, I know.

The laptop was spared the Cupboard Of Lost Youth when I found a replacement battery for it on a Chinese website.

Sites such as AliExpress are, for gadget junkies like me, the source of, and solution to, the problem of waste.

For each barely functioning thing I buy there that breaks two days after it arrives, there are 100 sellers of things that can help make it go again. It is the circle of AliExpress life.

## Viewpoint

# 10 days of saving the earth – one tissue at a time

My reusable wet wipe stunk because I forgot to wash it, but it felt good to save the earth by not using disposable items



John Lui



On the sixth day of my zero-waste lifestyle plan, I opened my work bag and the smell of old gym socks wafted out. I took the reusable wet wipe out of its pouch, gave it a sniff and was reminded of canals at high tide. It needs a daily rinse and dry, but I had missed a day or two, so my backpack began emitting the vapours of a sarcophagus.

Until that point, I was congratulating myself for doing a fantastic job at saving the planet. In six days, I had not used a single disposable item – no chopsticks, plastic cutlery, foam food boxes, disposable drink containers or plastic shopping bags.

Inside my bag was a water bottle, a thermos flask, a sealable tub with a spoon for takeaway food and that swampy abomination of a wet rag.

The whole thing was a back-strainer and it clanked with every step. Going anywhere was like going camping.

"Put it in here," I would tell the checkout person at the supermarket, handing her a fetching canvas tote bag and peeking to see if anyone in the queue noticed that there was a hero in their midst.

In the last four years, companies handing out media kits have almost all opted for fabric bags over paper. They used to sit in a sad pile. This

week, they found their purpose.

Once, I was in the food aisle grabbing oranges when, without thinking, I ripped two plastic bags off the roll. These were discreetly tucked into a corner in the hope the next person would not mind using pre-torn bags.

It was a bit strange seeing fruit loll about loosely in a tote bag, but it is not a big deal unless you are the type who hates to see your groceries mingling and getting to know each other.

On day five, it occurred to me that when I go strawless in my restaurant drink, I am not actually removing a straw from the landfill or incinerator. It is merely moving one person over, to someone not as enlightened as me.

The thought made me want to weep, but it was not worth the rummage for a wipe inside a bag with half my kitchen in it.

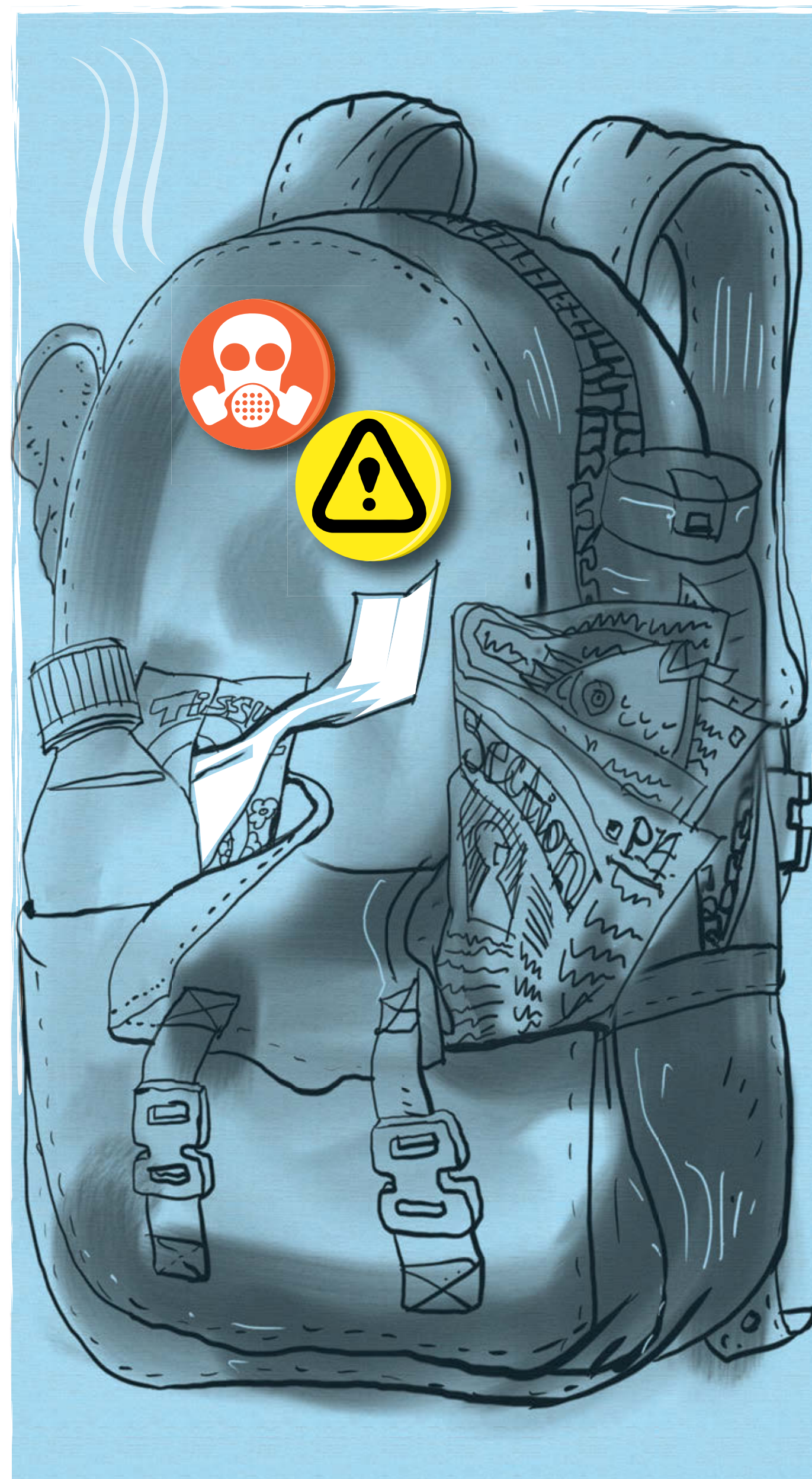
It was not all small gestures, however. I have a laptop, purchased in 2013, with a dying battery inside and I was ready to banish it to the cupboard where all dead electronics go.

In the spirit of zero waste, I really should put the broken things into recycling, but each item sparks joy, if joy is the aching remembrance of happiness locked in an irretrievable and ever-receding past as one stands here in a state of disconsolate ennui. That is a lot to invest in a blender that has not worked since 2013, I know.

The laptop was spared the Cupboard Of Lost Youth when I found a replacement battery for it on a Chinese website.

Sites such as AliExpress are, for gadget junkies like me, the source of, and solution to, the problem of waste.

For each barely functioning thing I buy there that breaks two days after it arrives, there are 100 sellers of things that can help make it go again. It is the circle of AliExpress life.



ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

At the end of 10 days, I used disposables just once, when I ate at a press event.

I considered whipping out my plastic container and spooning the buffet into it, but was worried my hosts would think I was packing their food for takeaway. I do not

need my contacts to think any less of me than they already do.

All in all, it felt good to have saved the earth about a dozen plastic bags, 10 empty tins of Coke Zero, a good number of foam cups and about a pack of tissues.

On that last item, if on the MRT

train you happened to stand next to a guy who smelled like a burst sewage pipe, I apologise and from today, will go back to smelling like the usual – a mix of manliness, fortitude and shrimp sauce.

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## Taking cloth pads around the world

Menstrual hygiene products such as sanitary pads are a human right, according to the United Nations. But for young women in Kenya, they are a luxury.

During their periods, many girls wear multiple pairs of underwear, use scrap pieces of cloth to soak up the blood or just bleed freely in-stead.

Scared and ashamed, these young women can miss up to a week of school each month.

This was what yoga teacher Kathy Gabriel learnt when she went to Kenya to attend the Lamu Yoga Festival for the first time in 2017.

Organisers asked participants to take along sanitary pads to donate to a girls school, so Mrs Gabriel and a friend, Ms Miwa Someya, brought 10 packs.

But they knew these would quickly run out, so when they returned for the festival last year, they brought along pads that would last a little longer.

The duo founded a non-profit organisation called Seva Seed, which aims to take menstrual health education to women in under-privileged countries. Seva is a Sanskrit word that means service.

About two months before the festival, they roped in 20 volunteers to make a total of 300 reusable pads.

The women distributed these pads at two schools in Lamu, a small fishing village along Kenya's coast.

The duo also held workshops for about 400 students, where they spoke about health and hygiene during menstruation, as well as how to sew and maintain reusable pads from recycled material.

Conversations like these do not take place in the predominantly Muslim community of Lamu, where menstruation is a taboo topic.

Menstruating women are seen as impure and not allowed to pray or enter mosques.

But because periods are not dis-

cussed, women grow up without understanding the changes happening in their bodies.

Having a period is a hindrance to their daily lives. They are so ashamed of their own bodies when it is actually other people who have created this shame," says Mrs Gabriel.

To counter the taboo, the Seva Seed founders make their workshops enjoyable and light-hearted.

"We chose fun, colourful patterns to make the pads because we wanted the girls to be excited to use them and talk about their periods."

"When the girls wash and hang them up to dry, they do not look like pads," says Mrs Gabriel.

She adds that one of the teachers in Lamu was so inspired that she asked for more fabric to teach similar workshops at six different slums in Nairobi, the country's capital.

Since their initial workshop, Mrs Gabriel and Ms Someya, 40, have led similar sessions at a school in Bagan and monastery in Inle, Myanmar.

To increase production, they have also engaged a Burmese seamstress to sew reusable pads.

In Singapore, they conduct workshops once every few months, teaching volunteers how to sew reusable pads, and raise funds to take



menstrual health education to more women in developing countries.

One such volunteer is Ms Kristine Wong, 24.

The navigating officer in the merchant navy says: "My mum is Indonesian and moved to Singapore before I was born, so I can understand how women in a less devel-

oped city cannot afford menstrual products."

"But we are all women, we all have menstruation. So if I can do my part to ease the pain of another woman, why not?"

• To find out more, go to [www.sevaseed.org](http://www.sevaseed.org)

Non-profit organisation Seva Seed taught about 400 young women in Lamu, Kenya, how to sew reusable cloth pads. PHOTO: SEVA SEED

## Alternative period products



### REUSABLE PADS

Reusable pads are made from cotton or flannel and secured to the gusset of the underwear by snap buttons. To prevent the pad from shifting or leaking, regular cloth pad users recommend wearing tight underwear to help it stay in place.

A day pad from India-based company Eco Femme costs \$7.05 (\$S10.95), while an overnight pad costs \$8.50. For more information, go to [www.ecofemme.org](http://www.ecofemme.org)



### PERIOD PANTIES

Period panties are washable, absorbent underwear that can hold between one and two tampons' worth of blood. Some wear them with a tampon or menstrual cup, while others rely on period panties alone.

A classic hip hugger from US company Thinx costs \$47.20, while a classic bikini from Australian company Modibodi costs \$31.90 or \$36.90, depending on absorbency.

For more information, go to [www.shethinx.com](http://www.shethinx.com) or [www.livemeluna.com](http://www.livemeluna.com)

### MENSTRUAL CUPS

Menstrual cups are small cups that can be fitted under the cervix, like a tampon, where they collect menstrual blood for up to 12 hours. The cups are made from medical grade silicone and can be used for 10 to 15 years if they are properly cleaned and maintained.

Prices vary according to brand and size. A Freedom Cup costs \$33, while a Lunette Cup costs \$49.90.

For more information, go to [www.freedomcups.org](http://www.freedomcups.org) or [www.livemeluna.com](http://www.livemeluna.com)

### SEA PEARLS

Sea pearls are reusable tampons made from sea sponges, which are durable and naturally renewable.

They should be dampened with water to soften them before insertion. If cared for properly, sea pearls can last three to six months.

A pair of sea pearls starts at US\$21 (\$28.45). For more information, go to [www.jadeandpearl.com/](http://www.jadeandpearl.com/) sea-pearls



# New spin on old threads

From thrifting to clothes swaps, **Olivia Ho** tells you how to be a clotheshorse while avoiding fast fashion and gives you a glimpse of what is in her wardrobe



People often say to me in passing: "You have so many clothes. It's like you have a new outfit every time I see you."

The funny thing is that none of my clothes has been new in a long time. In the past two years, I have gone without buying new clothes – with the exception of three "repro" (vintage reproduction) dresses that I got at under-\$25 clearance sales.

On a day-to-day basis, I clothe myself in vintage or thrifted outfits and other people's cast-offs. Like a sartorial catfish, I scavenge my way through the bottom of the fashion world.

I love clothes. What I wear every day is a fundamental source of happiness. Yet, I have come to realise over the years that this desire to always have new clothes is terribly unsustainable, not just for my closet space, but also for the environment.

About 80 billion new pieces of clothing are consumed worldwide each year, 2015 fashion documentary *The True Cost* unveiled.

A 2016 report by management consulting firm McKinsey & Company estimates that if 80 per cent of the population of emerging economies reaches the same level of clothing consumption as the Western world by 2025, carbon dioxide emissions would increase by 77 per cent to 3,030 million tonnes.

Brands such as Burberry and H&M have been accused of burning or shredding unsold clothes – sometimes because they are defective and, other times, to protect the brand's exclusivity.

Burberry destroyed almost US\$40 million (\$S55 million) worth of stock in 2017. The British luxury label has since said it will stop doing this, but the problem is industry-wide.

It is possible to be a clotheshorse while avoiding fast fashion – or, for that matter, buying fresh togs altogether.

Here are some ways of putting together a wardrobe without adding to the fashion industry's immense environmental strain.

## 1 VINTAGE BUYS

There is no easy way to get your hands on vintage outfits here. With exceptions such as Dustbunny Vintage in Keong Saik Road, vintage stores have little physical presence in Singapore, so I do most of my hunting online.

I follow my favourite sellers on Instagram to keep abreast of deals. I also frequent pop-ups and flea markets, such as the Katong Square Lifestyle and Vintage Market by The Retro Factory, and check out vintage stores when I am abroad.

One must be prepared that quality vintage outfits can be expensive. The older clothes are, the rarer and more valuable they get, not to mention the costs sellers incur in acquiring and restoring them. The price of a dress from the 1960s and earlier can go well into hundreds of dollars.

I almost never spend more than \$100 on a piece of clothing – my vintage purchases range from 1980s dresses I got from online business Vintagekind for \$30 or less, to a \$90 powder-blue 1970s jacket-and-dress set from local store BajuMama Vintage.

A lot of vintage clothing is discovered in imperfect condition.

Ms Eileen Cher, 31, who runs Singapore online store Five Stones Vintage, says a good soak in cleaning agent Retro Clean can sometimes bring a faded or dirty garment back to life.

Airing or washing it with a strong detergent or vinegar can remove bad odours, while zippers that stick can be lubricated with petroleum jelly, oil or wax.

## 2 THRIFTING

Should you wish to pop some tags, like rapper Macklemore in his 2012 hit song, Thrift Shop, be warned that thrifting is not for the faint-hearted. After hours of rummaging through musty rejects, you might be tempted to give up.

But I have found some of my most beloved clothes in thrift stores, including brands such as Kate Spade and Karen Millen, through relentless digging.

Wear a slip and leggings in case the dressing rooms are crowded and you want to strip down in the aisle to save time. Do not just check the racks, check the floor too.

With Japanese decluttering expert Marie Kondo all the rage now because of her Netflix show, this may be a golden age for clothing scavengers, as people feel compelled to chuck out good stuff in the name of minimalism.

The thrift stores of Brooklyn in New York and Brick Lane in London are some of my favourite hunting grounds.

Closer to home, the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations' New2U shop in Waterloo Street and the Salvation Army Praisehaven store in Bukit Timah can throw

up unexpected gems – and for good causes, no less.

Refash, an online platform with outlets in shopping centres such as Orchard Gateway and City Plaza, buys and resells pre-loved clothes. There is also a thriving secondhand community on online marketplaces Carousell and Etsy.

## 3 RENTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thrift store chic is all very well for some occasions, but there are professions in which you have to look on-brand all the time. In which case, consider a clothing rental subscription.

I did a trial run with Style Theory, a local company that, for \$129 a month, allows you to rent three outfits at a time – delivery and laundry included – and get three more once the first batch is returned.

The company offers a selection of more than 25,000 items, including brands such as Nicole Miller, Coast and Self Portrait, which I would not be able to afford usually.

"Statistically, 80 per cent of the clothes that women buy are worn a maximum of three times," says Style Theory co-founder Raena Lim, 30, quoting an article in *American business magazine Fast Company*.

"Our sharing-economy model means that clothing can get much higher utilisation, leading to much fewer clothes ending up in landfills over time."

She acknowledges the environmental cost of the plastic and paper used for delivery packaging, although Style Theory's mailers are dual-use and it aims to implement 100 per cent reusable packaging by this year.

I discovered that if you planned assiduously, you could squeeze in a delivery and return every week, which adds up to 12 items a month.

The downside was that designs I wanted would often be rented out or not be in the right size.

Still, if you are already spending more than \$100 on clothes a month and an outfit ceases to spark joy in you after you have worn it once or twice, a subscription model such as Style Theory is worth your dime.

## 4 UPCYCLING

Upcycling can put a fresh spin on clothes you have grown bored of.

A way to modernise a dowdy dress is to chop off long sleeves – which can then be turned into sashes or headbands – and shorten the hemlines. I have seen seamstress friends turn frumpy nightgowns into cute skirts.

It takes time and effort. Veteran upcycler Agatha Lee recommends you start simple – re-dyeing a top or adding embellishments such as beads or buttons.

"Don't try to deconstruct everything and put it back together," says the 45-year-old textile artist, who co-runs eco-friendly purchasing platform The Green Collective. "If it's your first time and you fail, it can be disheartening."

She hosts quarterly sewing workshops, which she calls Repair Sewcials, and posts do-it-yourself tutorials on [www.agytextileartist.com](http://www.agytextileartist.com). Topics include how to do Shibori dye at home and embroidering on old clothes.

"Sometimes, if a button falls off, people just throw the whole thing away," she says. "But you can often make something more wearable."

## 5 CLOTHES SWAPS

The clothes swap is a time-honoured method of rejuvenating your wardrobe for little to no cost. All you need are like-minded friends, a living room and clothes racks.

A large swathe of my wardrobe comes from the generosity of people who have items they no longer wear, but still cherish enough to not dump in a donation box.

Swaps are catching on in Singapore.

Six-month-old company The Fashion Pulpit has even turned it into a business model: Members pay tiered fees – \$35 for one day, \$88 for a month and so on – and bring in clothes, for which they are assigned points based on quality and condition.

These points are used to swap for other pieces in its Liang Court store, from which the public can also buy items.

The Fashion Pulpit has more than 300 active members and has collected more than 13,000 fashion items so far, of which more than 6,700 have been swapped.

Owner Raye Padit, 30, says the company has been approached by universities and multinational corporations who want help with organising their own swaps. What I have discovered is that the joy of finding something that fits you is often matched – even exceeded – by the joy of finding your unwanted things new owners.

Perhaps they will love them as you did not.

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Follow Olivia Ho on Instagram @ohomatopoeia



1. Polka dot ruffle skirt (\$15, from The Fashion Pulpit) and ribbed knit top (private clothes swap) with spanner necklace (\$25, from a National Museum Singapore flea market) and Family mustard heels (\$100, from (Un)fashion Vintage in Bangkok)

2. Suncoo Caius Dress (rented from Style Theory, retail price: \$213) and polka dot shirt (£15 or \$S26.14) from Rokit Vintage in Brick Lane, London

3. 1950s tailored orange chrysanthemum silk cheongsam (\$90, from Five Stones Vintage) ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG



4. Kate Spade Cloud Dot midi dress (US\$35 or \$S47, retail price: US\$244), from Beacon's Closet thrift store in Brooklyn, with silk scarf (private clothes swap)



5. Silk Betty Lane organza gown dated by seller to the late 1930s or early 1940s (US\$30 or \$S42.50), from United States-based Etsy store Simplicity Is Bliss. The dress was mildly damaged, with stains on the sleeves and nearly all of its buttons missing. I soaked it and sewed on new buttons. I plan to trim it to calf length.



## A world without single-use plastic



Akshita Nanda

Bowls made of leaves and cutlery of wood; soluble starch wrappers for takeaway food; brown paper packages tied up with string, these are a few of my favourite things.

Or, at least, when I consider what a lifestyle without single-use plastic might look like.

A friend conducted a lifestyle experiment last week and posted the results to her Instagram story. It made for fascinating viewing.

For seven days, she tracked how often she used an item made of plastic that was meant to be thrown away after one use. Her entries looked like this: "Breakfast: spoon, fork, knife, Cup?" The replies informed her that yes, the paper cup holding her morning coffee was lined with plastic.

On the same day: "Lunch: Styrofoam box, spoon, fork, Plastic cup and lid."

"Bubble tea cup with clingfilm lid. Straw. Plastic bag for bun."

Then, slightly worried: "One comment says I should carry around all this trash in a bag so I know how much it is."

Finally, came a restaurant dinner and takeaway dessert. "Coffee cup. Cake wrapper."

The total almost fills an average plastic grocery shopping bag and was generated by one person in one day. There are 5.64 million people in Singapore, according to the Department of Statistics, so it is frightening to calculate the potential plastic waste generated by us.

Luckily, the National Environment Agency already does the maths for us: In 2017, Singapore generated 815,200 tonnes of plastic waste and only 6 per cent of that was recycled.

As waterways choke on human plastic waste, news feeds are flooded with stories of sea creatures ingesting shopping bags or trapped in plastic rings, or the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, the name given to the 79,000 tonnes of plastic floating in the ocean between Hawaii and California.

We can't blame all this on domestic consumers, though I will admit that I bought a plastic bottle of coconut water two weeks ago, in between outdoor photo shoots.

I usually carry around a water bottle, but drank it dry that day. If a public water cooler or tender green coconut had been nearer at hand, I probably would not have chosen to buy a drink in a plastic bottle (which has since been washed and put in a recycling bin).

This is my point: Domestic consumption is driven by industry habit. Single-use plastic is so much a part of our lifestyle. Think of shrink-wrapped fruit at grocery stores, plastic bags to weigh vegetables in, containers for cakes and buns and kopi in a see-through carrier bag with a straw.

Numerous food and beverage kiosks are enabled by use-and-throw utensils, plastic cups and clear plastic containers. Think also of how all these businesses, grocery stores and more, advertise on PVC boards.

Can we imagine a life without all these convenient, cheap, ready-to-use items?

People can start using cloth tote bags or carry steel straws and their own cutlery. They can choose to cover leftovers at home with plates instead of plastic wrap, but there are more influential patterns of behaviour to attack.

Last month, I saw what a city without single-use plastic might look like. It was during a trip to India for my cousin's wedding, held six months after the state of Maharashtra implemented a ban on single-use plastic, including plastic cutlery and utensils, shopping bags and Styrofoam packaging.

Several other states in India have followed suit since, cracking down on vendors, transporters and users of such items and, now, the European Union will follow suit.

You might imagine a ban on single-use plastic would come as a nightmare for a family ready to throw a good, old-fashioned big Indian wedding.

Consider the typical henna ritual, usually a small, intimate gathering at home with about 100 relatives and friends. Guests are fed and offered the option of decorating their palms with henna – applied through plastic cones.

At my cousin's henna party, the plates and bowls were made of woven leaves. The cutlery was made of wood or paper. The drinking vessels were glass or steel, with paper straws for those who wanted them. The henna was poured into a cone made of multiple layers of newspaper and the garbage bags were made of corn starch, a material that degrades within six months. Traditional plastic takes centuries.

There was some bottled water in plastic bottles at the party – plastic bottles had been excluded from the ban as long as vendors arranged recycling centres.

Even fast-food outlets and coffee chains complied with the ban. Cups and straws were made of paper, cutlery of wood and, if you wanted to take home cakes or doughnuts, you had to carry the paper box carefully because plastic separators were no longer allowed.

A life without single-use plastic is possible. What is needed is the will to implement it.

Nine years ago, I interviewed a marine industry executive in Singapore, who had also done his national service in the naval diving unit.

It is unimaginable, the whole seabed is covered with plastic bags. You can't even get a look at the sand," he said in 2010.

Imagine what the sea under Singapore looks like now.

People have been trying to turn things around. In December 2017, The Straits Times wrote about two undergraduates from Nanyang Technological University who were trying to convince event organisers and retailers to switch to starch bags made of tapioca flour. The bags degrade in water and soil.

In October last year, The Straits Times reported that a local biotechnology start-up, RWDC Industries, which develops biodegradable bioplastic, had secured millions in funding. The bioplastic can be used to make cutlery, drinking straws, cup lids, food and beverage packaging and diapers.

For several years now, my local supermarket has sold biodegradable garbage bags and cutlery in the "Party Ware" section.

These labels speak the truth, a fork I held under the tap nearly dissolved in my hand. These wares are at least 50 cents more expensive than regular plastic, though, which makes me wonder how well these items sell. Most people look at the price of an item, not its composition, when shopping.

We have the solutions, but most people will not change their lifestyle if it requires constant, conscious decisions. That is why a plastic ban works, stimulating industries to change old habits.

Of course, a ban works about as well as it is enforced. In India, some industries are still fighting a battle to have their plastic wares given special treatment.

Milk packaging is one of the sticky issues – vendors are unwilling to commit to recycling the plastic bags the milk is packaged in.

But there have been delightful instances of creative entrepreneurship. Businesses are springing up, making bags of corn starch or other biodegradable materials.

In Tamil Nadu, a man who sells green coconuts on a handcart offers his customers drinking straws made of papaya stalks.

We have the solutions, now we need the social, political and industrial will to implement them. Because unlike my friend's Instagram story, the single-use plastic we see around us is not going to disappear after a day.

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# Vacation with a heart



Clara Lock

Beyond reusing towels or asking for the sheets to be changed only every other day on vacation, today's travellers are looking to do much more for the earth. From a marine survey of manta rays near Indonesia's Sumba island to responsible slum tours in Delhi and Mumbai, here are some vacations worth considering.

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## SURVEY MANTA RAYS

The Indonesian archipelago is a string of more than 17,500 islands that are home to wildlife such as manta rays, sea turtles and komodo dragons.

Hop aboard luxury yacht Rascal for an 11-day voyage that lets you dive, snorkel and trek to catch a glimpse of these creatures, as well as contribute to a survey of manta rays carried out by a team from Conservation International (CI) and the Indonesian Manta Project.

The package, which departs from Labuan Bajo, includes a six-night sail that passes Komodo Island and carries on to Sumba, followed by a four-night stay at Nihi Sumba resort.

Guests can dive alongside the marine researchers, and participate in manta satellite tagging efforts.

Such satellite tagging allows researchers to track the movement and behaviour of the rays, and use the data to shape conservation strategies for the species.

For instance, a 2014 CI-led manta ray study uncovered a manta ray nursery in Raja Ampat – the first in South-east Asia.

The conservation authorities went on to curtail speedboat use in the nursery to prevent injury and disturbance to the baby manta rays.

The Rascal is available only for private charter. An 11-day package for eight people starts at US\$98,293 (S\$133,365).

For more information, go to [www.rascalvoyages.com](http://www.rascalvoyages.com)



Contribute to a survey of manta rays carried out by a team from Conservation International and the Indonesian Manta Project. PHOTO: RASCAL VOYAGES

## SAVE BALI'S BEACHES

Bali may be billed an island paradise, but its beaches are often swamped with trash. From December to March, seasonal winds and heavy rainfall result in mounds of rubbish washing up on its south-westerly facing beaches at tourist hot spots such as Kuta, Seminyak and Canggu.

Join a clean-up programme organised by Trash Hero, a non-governmental organisation that holds weekly clean-up sessions in various parts of Bali, including Amed, Canggu and Ubud. Participation is free and you can sign up on the spot.

Trash Heroes also operates in countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar. For schedules, meeting points and more information, go to [www.trashhero.org](http://www.trashhero.org)

## BOOK A TRIP, GIFT A TRIP

Book a trip with Responsible Travel, which lists about 5,000 tours by companies that offer authentic experiences with minimal negative impact on people and places.

These include marine conservation expeditions in East Timor, cycling holidays in Cyprus and cultural tours in Bhutan.

When booking a trip, travellers can also opt in to gift a day trip to disadvantaged youth around the world.

The company covers the cost of these trips, and has taken children in Cambodia to visit the Angkor Wat, children living in Brazil's favelas (slums) on a cruise, and children in Zimbabwe to visit a wildlife conservancy.

For more information, go to [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)



# Green holiday

You won't find air-conditioning, tissue paper or plastic bottles at the sustainable Cempedak Private Island



Michelle Ng

Rarely do you get to see the hens that are laying the eggs for your breakfast.

But there I was on a farm on Bintan Island, surrounded by more than 250 clucking hens picking at grains off the ground around me.

It is a detour en route to my final destination – where said breakfast of scrambled eggs will be had – of an eco-resort on Cempedak Island, located not too far off Bintan Island.

Mr Andrew Dixon says he wanted me to see how this farm provides for the private island that he owns.

The sprawling 2ha farm grows fruit and vegetables, such as cempedak, chilli padi and rosella plants, which make their way into the fresh dishes served there.

Mr Dixon says they are still expanding the farm as they want to be as self-sufficient as possible.

The same principle goes for nearby Nikoi Private Island, which he owns and has operated since 2007.

It is only after I set foot on Cempedak Private Island that I understand why being self-sustainable is so important to him.

The 17ha tropical island is as remote as it is lush. The bamboo resort blends seamlessly into its surrounding jungle island habitat, with each of the 20 beachfront and sea-view villas – the latter perched on a ridge – offering a view of the ocean.

A sustainable lifestyle here is born out of necessity as "throwing away" is not an option – all the trash goes somewhere on the island.

So, the island does not generate much waste.

Much thought has gone into ensuring everything is reusable or can be repurposed.

The villas are made from locally sourced bamboo and topped with large Cogon grass roofs for protection from the elements.

They rely on natural ventilation and sea breeze to keep the temperature cool with a sole ceiling fan hanging directly above the push bed. Long mosquito nets draped over the bed keep bugs at bay.

Drinking water is available in refillable glass bottles. There is no tissue paper provided, only hand towels.

There are definitely no signs of energy-sucking hair dryers or water-guzzling bathtubs.

As a millennial accustomed to urbanised city life in Singapore, the slow pace of island life catches me off guard in the beginning.

At the island's only restaurant, there is only a rough time frame for when meals are served.

The kitchen offers a fixed menu that changes daily according to the season and availability of ingredients. No two meals are exactly the same.

I am happy to leave it in the good hands of executive chef Dika to tickle my taste buds, though the plants, which make their way into the fresh dishes served there.

The majority of the ingredients is sourced from local markets in Bintan and supplemented with daily harvests from the Bintan Island farm.

The fresh produce is prepared simply, with an emphasis on showcasing Indonesian flavours in a fine-dining setting. I have never had ayam bakar grilled chicken served to me in a more refined plating. It is tender with a lovely smoky aroma.

Likewise, there are no set timings for activities both on land and in water.

Throughout my three-day stay, I see the same few couples chilling by the pool and reading in cosy

nooks by the beach, with no excitable children to break the tranquil spell.

Unlike its family-friendly sister island Nikoi, Cempedak is an adults-only island with a minimum age of 16 for guests.

Two-thirds of the virgin rainforest on the island are left untouched, with only natural footpaths for guests to explore the habitats of animals which call the island home.

My nature guide Jaslin tells me pangolins live on the island but alas, I am not lucky enough to see one.

One evening, I make my way barefoot – like the staff – to the outdoor bar.

The setting sun turns the sky into a fiery mix of red and yellow as I sip on a tropical ginger-infused cocktail, one I had concocted earlier at a cocktail-making session.

The bar stocks an impressive selection of whisky, rum and gin from boutique distillers, including Paper Lantern Gin, a rice-based gin distilled in Singapore using ingredients from South-east Asia.

Mr Dixon beams with pride when he tells me there are no single-use plastic bottles on the island.

The likes of syrups, juices and soda water are prepared by the staff and stored in refillable glass bottles to cut down on unnecessary packaging.

It is the attention to such small details that convinces me Cempedak is truly committed to the idea of sustainability.

[ngmich@sph.com.sg](mailto:ngmich@sph.com.sg)

• This trip was sponsored by Cempedak Private Island. Rates for Cempedak villa start at \$475 a night, with an additional \$90 a person a day for meals.



## GETTING THERE

Take a one-hour ferry from Singapore to Bintan Resorts, then a one-hour taxi ride to the jetty, followed by a 30-minute speedboat ride to reach Cempedak Private Island.

## TIPS

• There are no television sets and telephones in the villas but the island is equipped with Wi-Fi and reliable phone reception should you wish to stay connected. If you choose to go offline, take along books to keep yourself occupied.

• As the weather is generally quite hot and humid, be prepared for mosquitoes and the occasional bugs. The villa provides a body lotion that doubles as mosquito repellent should you forget to bring your own.

• Check the in-villa iPad for the day's activities and other important information such as weather conditions. Use it to contact the concierge for any queries or requests.

Villas at Cempedak Private Island are cooled by natural ventilation and sea breezes. PHOTO: CEMPEDAK PRIVATE ISLAND

SCAN TO WATCH Eco-friendly resort near Bintan



## BE A MARINE BIOLOGIST FOR A WEEK

Learn about marine conservation on Vamizi island, located off the coast of Mozambique's far north.

During the six-day package offered by luxury travel company Andbeyond, Dr Tessa Hempson, marine biologist and operations manager of Oceans Without Borders, will lead guests in fish tagging, measuring and monitoring reef systems, as well as doing a turtle nest survey.

Guests can also interact with the local community, such as visiting a school and local fishing village.

Experienced divers can visit Neptune's Arm, known as one of

the best dive sites in Africa for its lush coral garden which tumbles down a steep underwater cliff. They can also visit a protected grey reef shark breeding site.

All proceeds go towards Oceans Without Borders, a partnership between Andbeyond and the Africa Foundation which facilitates research and marine conservation and supports surrounding communities.

A six-day package costs US\$10,775 (S\$14,568), which includes a US\$1,500 donation to Oceans Without Borders.

For more information, go to [www.andbeyond.com](http://www.andbeyond.com)

Dr Tessa Hempson (third from left) and Oceans Without Borders participants tagging grey reef sharks near Vamizi Island, Mozambique. PHOTO: DR MARK ZIEMICKI



## RESPONSIBLE SLUM TOURISM

Tourists curious about the slums that dot Delhi and Mumbai can visit them responsibly with Indian company Reality Tours and Travel.

Local guides lead guests on walking tours that cover traditional trades such as pottery, leather tanning and making papadum, a cracker-like snack.

Guests can also have a vegetarian lunch with a local family in their home after the tour.

No photographs are allowed during the tours, and 80 per cent of profits are ploughed back to the local community through the company's non-profit arm, Reality Gives.

The company also works with

Pack for a Purpose, which lists useful donations that travellers can give the slum dwellers, such as stationery, dictionaries, working mobile phones and laptops.

A 2½-hour tour of Dharavi slum in Mumbai costs RS900 (S\$17) a person. For more information and bookings, go to [www.realitytour-sandtravel.com](http://www.realitytour-sandtravel.com)

Visit slums in Delhi and Mumbai responsibly on a walking tour. PHOTO: REALITY TOURS & TRAVEL





chewonitcomics.blogspot.com

chew on A STOWAWAY

Jan 7, 2019  
A bird was found onboard a flight travelling from Singapore to London

A mynah is flying around, evading capture.

AHH

No need to be terrified — it is just a harmless bird...

...which might poop when spooked!

AHH

BABY BLUES™

BY RICK KIRKMAN & JERRY SCOTT

YAGH!

GAH!

YEEP!

HEY!

SO I GUESS WE'LL CALL THIS WREN'S EARBUD PHASE.

KEEP YOUR DEVICES CLOSE AND YOUR WIRES CLOSER.

PEANUTS

featuring "Good ol' Charlie Brown"

by SCHULZ

HERE SHE COMES..

OKAY, CHUCK, I'M ALL SET FOR THE HOCKEY GAME...HOW DO WE PLAY?

WELL, YOU AND I WILL BE CENTERS... WE'LL FACE-OFF HERE IN THE MIDDLE..

LINUS AND SCHROEDER WILL BE WINGS..

THE IDEA IS TO SHOOT THE PUCK BETWEEN THOSE CHUNKS OF SNOW...THE GOALIE, OF COURSE, WILL TRY TO STOP YOU...

WHICH ONE IS THE GOALIE? THE GOALIE IS THE ONE WEARING THOSE PADS...

THE GOALIE IS THE ONE WEARING THOSE PADS...

SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY

WHAT'S UP?

JUST CHILLIN' TODAY.

BOY, WOULD I LOVE TO JUST CHILL ALL DAY.

BUT I CAN'T. WANNA KNOW WHY?

THE VOICE. THE VOICE?

IT DRIVES ME. I AM DRIVEN BY THE VOICE.

IT NEVER LETS UP.

TRY TO FIND A QUIET PLACE AND IT FOLLOWS YOU. THERE IS NO PEACE FOR THOSE WHO HEAR THE VOICE.

FIX THE KITCHEN SINK.

THERE IT IS AGAIN.

garfield

WAS THERE A "SUPERNOVA" TONIGHT?

NOPE. JUST A GOOFY ONE.

BREWSTER ROCKIT: SPACE GUY!

BY TIM RICKARD

YEARS AGO, NASA SENT A PLAQUE WITH A PICTURE OF HUMANS ON IT INTO SPACE ON THE PIONEER PROBE.

BUT THAT PICTURE MADE US LOOK VULNERABLE. WEAK. WE PRACTICALLY INVITED AN INVASION!

TO KEEP ALIENS AWAY, MAYBE WE SHOULD SEND A PROBE WITH A PICTURE THAT MAKES US LOOK SCARY!

"OR CUTE AND CUDDLY! NO ONE WILL WANT TO HARM US!"

"OR A SUPERHERO!"

MAYBE A COMBINATION OF ALL THREE!

IT'S SOME KIND OF RACE OF ADORABLE SQUID-KITTENS THAT SHOOT LASERS FROM THEIR EYES.

THAT. WE GOTTA GO SEE.

Sudoku Pacific

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

9			6		1	4
	4		9	1		8
	1		3			
6	8		1		7	
	2		4			1
			6		3	
2		9	7		1	
1	9	3				2

1/20

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

5	6	7	9	1	3	8	4	2
3	2	1	5	8	4	6	7	9
8	4	9	7	2	6	3	5	1
4	7	5	8	3	1	2	9	6
1	8	6	2	4	9	5	3	7
9	3	2	6	5	7	1	8	4
6	9	3	1	7	5	4	2	8
7	5	8	4	6	2	9	1	3
2	1	4	3	9	8	7	6	5



## Free to air

### CHANNEL 5

**AM**  
**6.00** The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (Variety)  
**6.45** Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (Variety)  
**7.00** The Dr Oz Show 8 (HD) (Info-Ed)  
**8.00** Talking Point 2018 (HD) (Current Affairs)  
**8.30** Wheel Of Fortune 35 (HD) (Variety)  
**9.30** Secret Meat Business (Info-Ed)  
**10.00** Andre Rieu: Welcome To My World (Culture)  
**11.00** Scandale – Two Piano Youngsters In A Recital For Two Pianos (Culture)  
**PM**  
**12.20** Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (Variety)  
**12.30** Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (HD) (Info-Ed)  
**1.00** America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (Variety)  
**3.00** World's Best Beaches (Variety)  
**4.00** Buzzing Hawks (Variety)  
**5.00** The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (Variety)  
**5.30** Films & Stars (PG) (Variety)  
**6.00** Just For Laughs Gags 18 (HD) (Variety)  
**6.20** Cine On 5: X-Men: Days Of Future Past (PG) (CC) (Movie)  
**9.00** News 5 (HD)  
**9.30** Micro Monsters (PG) (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**10.30** Lip Sync Battle 4 (PG) (Variety)  
**11.00** Fear Factor MTV USA (PG) (Variety)  
**AM**  
**12.00** The Dr Oz Show 9 (HD) (PG13) (Info-Ed)  
**12.50** Plastic Surgery Is My Business (PG) (Info-Ed)  
**1.20** Andre Rieu: Welcome To My World (Culture)  
**2.20** Scandale – Two Piano Youngsters In A Recital For Two Pianos (Culture)  
**3.40** Lip Sync Battle 4 (PG) (Variety)  
**4.10** Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (Variety)  
**4.20** Wheel Of Fortune 35 (HD) (Variety)  
**5.10** The Dr Oz Show 8 (HD) (Info-Ed)

### CHANNEL 8

**AM**  
**6.00** Food Source 3 (HD) (Variety)  
**7.00** Portrait Of Home 2 (Drama)  
**9.00** Happy Friends (Schoolkids)  
**9.30** New Doraemon (Schoolkids)  
**10.00** Little Incredible Explorer (Children)  
**10.30** Mark Your Calendar (Children)  
**11.00** Tuesday Report – Ninety Years Young (CC) (Info-Ed)

**11.30** One Hundred Tastes Of Taiwan 2 (HD) (Info-Ed)  
**PM**  
**12.00** The Quarters (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**2.00** City Foragers (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**2.30** Say It! (Variety)  
**3.30** Home Dining (CC) (Variety)  
**4.30** Beyond Words (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**6.30** Singapore Today (HD) (News)  
**7.00** Spring Flower (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**9.00** Foodie Sunday (CC) (Variety)  
**10.00** News Tonight (HD) (News)  
**10.30** Wake Up (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**10.35** Discover 30 Degrees North Latitude (PG) (CC) (Variety)  
**11.35** Frontline (Current Affairs)  
**AM**  
**12.05** The Legend Of S (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**2.05** Unriddle 2 (PG) (Drama)  
**4.05** The Deer And The Cauldron (HD) (PG) (Drama)

### CHANNEL U

**AM**  
**8.00** Home Shopping (Infomercial)  
**10.00** Come Sing With Me 2 (Variety)  
**PM**  
**12.00** Big Big World 2 (Info-Ed)  
**12.30** Food Secrets (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**1.30** Hey DJ (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**2.00** Schools Unlimited (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**3.00** Golden Rainbow (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**5.00** Lady With Class (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**7.00** Sound Of My Dream 2 (Variety) (Debut)  
**9.00** The Entertainer (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**11.00** News Tonight (News)  
**11.30** Sound Of My Dream 2 (Variety) (Debut)  
**AM**  
**1.30** Lord Of Shanghai (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**2.30** Close

### CHANNEL NEWSASIA

**AM**  
**6.00** Singapore Tonight  
**6.30** Correspondents' Diary  
**7.00** News Now  
**7.30** In Search Of Umami  
**8.00** News Now  
**8.30** Edible Wild  
**9.00** News Now  
**9.30** Made In Singapore  
**10.02** Conversation With  
**10.30** Super Octogenarians  
**11.00** News Now  
**11.30** Correspondents' Diary  
**PM**  
**12.00** News Now  
**12.30** In Search Of Umami  
**1.02** Japan Hour (English Subtitles)

**2.00** News Now  
**2.30** Money Mind  
**3.00** News Now  
**3.30** Asia Business First Weekend  
**4.02** Conversation With  
**4.30** Super Octogenarians  
**5.00** News Now  
**5.30** In Search Of Umami  
**6.00** News Now  
**6.30** Correspondents' Diary  
**7.02** Asia Business First Weekend  
**7.30** This Weekend (CC)  
**8.00** Primetime Asia  
**8.30** Singapore After Dark (CC)  
**10.00** Singapore Tonight  
**10.30** On The Red Dot – Old Enough! (CC)  
**11.02** A Big Little Murder  
**AM**  
**12.00** News Now  
**12.30** This Weekend  
**1.02** In Search Of Umami  
**1.30** On The Red Dot – Old Enough!  
**2.00** News Now  
**2.30** Money Mind  
**3.02** Conversation With  
**3.30** Super Octogenarians  
**4.00** News Now  
**4.30** Asia Business First Weekend  
**5.02** Cool Living In An Eco-City  
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

### VASANTHAM

**PM**  
**1.00** Indian Panorama: Hyper (PG) (Telugu)  
**4.00** Vasantham Box Office: Thanga Magan (PG) (CC)  
**7.00** OK Kanmani (Schoolkids)  
**8.00** Vera Level (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**8.30** Tamil Seithi (News)  
**9.00** Cinema Express: Seedan (PG13) (Tamil)  
**AM**  
**12.00** Tamil Seithi (R) (News)  
**12.30** Close

### OKTO

**AM**  
**7.00** Tip The Mouse (Preschool)  
**8.00** Sesame Street (HD) (Preschool)  
**9.00** Robot Trains (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**9.30** Tobot (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**10.00** Future Card Buddyfight Ace (Schoolkids)  
**10.30** CardFight!! Vanguard (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**11.00** Lego Ninjago – Sons Of Garmadon (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**11.30** Extreme Football (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**PM**  
**12.00** Word Whiz Or Slime Pit (Schoolkids)  
**12.30** Museum Mysteries (Schoolkids)  
**1.00** Blazing Team: Masters Of Yo Kwon Do (HD) (Schoolkids)

**1.30** Jane And The Dragon (Schoolkids)  
**2.00** Zorro The Chronicles (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**2.30** The Deep (HD) (Schoolkids) (CC)  
**3.00** Future Card Buddyfight (Schoolkids) (CC)  
**3.30** CardFight!! Vanguard G: Next (HD) (Preschool) (CC)  
**4.00** Bear Grylls Survival School (HD) (Schoolkids) (CC)  
**4.30** Blazing Team: Masters Of Yo Kwon Do (HD) (Schoolkids) (CC)  
**5.00** Jane And The Dragon (Schoolkids)  
**5.30** Zorro The Chronicles (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**6.00** Totally Totto (HD) (Schoolkids) (CC)  
**6.30** Fableicious (HD) (PG) (Schoolkids) (CC)  
**7.00** The Deep (HD) (CC) (Schoolkids)  
**7.30** Future Card Buddyfight (HD) (CC) (Schoolkids)  
**8.00** CardFight!! Vanguard G: Next (HD) (CC) (Schoolkids)  
**8.30** Bear Grylls Survival School (HD) (CC) (Schoolkids)  
**9.00** Ninja Warrior (PG) (CC) (Variety)  
**9.30** Perfection (CC) (Sports)  
**10.00** Max Muay Thai: Ultimate Muay Thai (HD) (PG13) (Sports)  
**AM**  
**12.00** Close

### SURIA

**AM**  
**10.00** Atuk PhD (Drama)  
**11.00** Ole Ole Temasya 2 (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**PM**  
**12.00** Balik Sekolah (HD) (Drama)  
**12.30** Suami Tanpa Cinta (HD) (Drama)  
**1.30** #Urbanista (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**2.00** Isteri Tuan Ihsan (Drama)  
**3.00** Juara Memasak Milenia (CC) (Variety)  
**4.00** Meh Sandar Pada Aku (HD) (PG) (Drama)  
**5.00** Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**6.00** Tahu Nahu (HD) (Schoolkids)  
**6.30** Manja 3 (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**7.00** The Project (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**7.30** Romantika 8 (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**8.00** Berita (HD) (News)  
**8.30** Slackers, Shockers, Suits And Superheroes (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**9.30** Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (Drama)  
**10.30** The Streets 2 (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**11.00** Bersamamu (CC) (Info-Ed)  
**11.30** Berita (HD) (R) (News)  
**AM**  
**12.00** Close

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to [www.starhub.com/tv](http://www.starhub.com/tv) or [www.singtel.com.sg](http://www.singtel.com.sg)

## Horoscope



March 21 - April 19



April 20 - May 20



May 21 - June 20



June 21 - July 22



July 23 - Aug 22



Aug 23 - Sept 22



Sept 23 - Oct 22



Oct 23 - Nov 21



Nov 22 - Dec 21



Dec 22 - Jan 19



Jan 20 - Feb 18



Feb 19 - March 20

• Provided by Astrology.com ([www.astrology.com](http://www.astrology.com))

Your personal energy does not feel powerful, but you can still take care of business. Just make sure you are asking the right people for help when you need it most.

A lunch meeting or dinner date should go better than expected – even if you are not sure what to expect in the first place. Your social energy needs to be grounded in food.

You are having a harder time communicating with your people, in part because you do not know what you are thinking. You might need time alone with your thoughts.

Focus on your issues – you need the attention more than your people do. See if someone close can cover for you while you take a long walk, go shopping or slide into meditation.

You are feeling much more measured and controlled than usual and may find that your energy is just right for a difficult conversation or a confrontation with a bully.

You need to get yourself organised – which, of course, is your speciality. It is one of those days when you do not feel right unless you are checking things off a list or putting everything in its place.

Although the big picture may not be to your liking, you can still have a good time appreciating life's small pleasures. Eat a good meal, take a scenic walk and watch the sun go down.

Let go of your baggage. Some of it is likely to fall out of your world entirely, while the rest is easier to carry and, hopefully, easier to deal with in the future. Your energy is right for it.

You and your partner – romantic or otherwise – are feeling quite different. It is definitely not a good time to make joint decisions. Try to put that stuff off at least until tomorrow.

A scathing comment comes your way, but it is not intended to be mean-spirited. You can decide whether or not to take it personally. You should try to take it in stride.

You need to take action, even if you do not have a plan. Spontaneous activity is best for you, as mental interference leads to paralysis or something much worse.

Your emotional side is a powerful force and you should find that you can cope with feelings that may have been too much to bear only a week or two ago. Embrace life.

## StarHub TV

### HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

**AM**  
**6.40** Pawn Stars 19  
**7.05** Storage Wars 12  
**7.35** The Pickers 11  
**8.30** Counting Cars 5  
**9.00** Big Easy Motors  
**9.30** History Drama: Vikings 5  
**10.25** History Drama: Project Blue Book  
**11.20** Ancient Aliens 10  
**PM**  
**12.15** The Curse Of Oak Island 5  
**1.10** The Curse Of Civil War Gold  
**2.05** Milwaukee Blacksmith  
**2.35** History Drama: Vikings 5  
**3.30** The Curse Of Oak Island 5  
**4.25** Ancient Aliens 10  
**5.20** History Drama: Project Blue Book  
**6.15** The Pickers 12  
**7.10** 10 Things You Don't Know About Malaysia  
**8.05** Forged In Fire 5  
**9.00** Mountain Men 7  
**9.55** The God Code  
**11.45** The Pickers 12  
**AM**  
**12.40** 10 Things You Don't Know About Malaysia  
**1.35** Mountain Men 7  
**2.30** Counting Cars 6  
**3.00** The Pickers 12  
**3.55** The God Code  
**5.45** Forged In Fire 5

### LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

**AM**  
**6.00** Bring It! 2  
**7.00** The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
**PM**  
**12.00** Married At First Sight Australia 4  
**3.00** A Surrogate's Nightmare  
**4.35** Seatbelt Psychic  
**5.00** Born This Way 2  
**6.00** Who Runs The World With Mongchin  
**7.00** Gok's Fill Your House For Free  
**8.00** Up! Pretty  
**10.00** And Baby Will Fall  
**11.35** Hoarders 8  
**AM**  
**12.30** Married At First Sight Australia 4  
**2.00** Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath  
**3.00** Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol  
**3.25** And Baby Will Fall  
**5.00** Gok's Fill Your House For Free

### HBO (CHANNEL 601)

**AM**  
**6.30** Daddy Day Care  
**8.00** The Lego Ninjago Movie  
**9.40** Bridget Jones's Baby (NC16)  
**11.40** The Mummy (2017) (NC16)  
**PM**  
**1.30** Braven (NC16)  
**3.05** Hugo  
**5.10** Cars 2  
**6.55** 12 Strong (NC16)

**9.00** Captain America: Civil War  
**11.25** Final Destination 3 (NC16)  
**AM**  
**12.55** Daredevil (NC16)  
**2.35** The Haunted Mansion  
**4.00** Bridget Jones's Baby (NC16)

### CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

**AM**  
**6.10** The HBO Movie Show  
**6.40** Alien Autopsy  
**8.15** The General's Daughter (NC16)  
**10.10** Analyze This  
**11.55** Patriots Day (NC16)  
**PM**  
**2.05** Patriot Games  
**4.00** Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope  
**6.05** Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back  
**8.15** Renegades (NC16)  
**10.00** Kidnap (NC16)  
**11.35** Strike Back 4 (M18)  
**AM**  
**1.15** Star Wars: Episode VI – Return Of The Jedi  
**3.30** Dead Again In Tombstone (NC16)  
**5.10** Howard The Duck

### HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

**AM**  
**7.45** Happy Camp 2 (HD)  
**9.30** Stay Healthy Stay Happy 4 (HD)  
**10.30** Momo's Paradise 4 (HD)  
**11.00** Pleasant Goat And Big Big Wolf – Flying Island: The Sky Adventure (HD)  
**11.30** Young Travellers' Survival Handbook (HD)  
**PM**  
**12.00** Follow Me 8 (HD)  
**12.30** Perfect Match 6 (HD)  
**2.00** StarHub Night Of Stars (HD)  
**4.30** Taste Taiwan 3 (HD)  
**5.00** Liao Zhai 4 (HD)  
**7.00** Stay Healthy Stay Happy 4 (HD)  
**8.00** Unlimited Song Season (HD)  
**10.00** Sweet Dreams (HD)  
**AM**  
**12.00** Liao Zhai 4 (HD)  
**2.00** Unlimited Song Season (HD)  
**3.30** Sweet Dreams (HD)

### HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

**AM**  
**6.00** Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018  
**7.00** Tennis: ATP 500 Erste Bank Open Day 6 Finals  
**9.30** BMX: 2018 Living The Ride  
**11.00** Cycling: Tour Of Hainan 2018 Highlights  
**PM**  
**12.00** Golf: Asian Tour SMBC Singapore Open Day 4  
**4.30** Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered  
**5.00** Table Tennis: Seamaster ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Men's Semi-finals  
**7.00** Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018  
**8.00** Asean Basketball League: San Miguel Alab Pilipinas Vs Mono Vampire  
**10.00** Table Tennis: Seamaster ITTF World

Tour Hungarian Open: Women & Men's Singles Finals  
**AM**  
**12.00** Cycling: 2018 Shanghai Criterium By Le Tour De France Highlights  
**1.00** Motorsports: 2018 MIB Nordic Gorzow FIM Speedway Grand Prix Of Poland Round 7 Highlights  
**2.00** Multi Sport: Fise World Series 2018 Highlights: Jeddah  
**3.00** FEI Equestrian World 2018  
**3.30** Motorsports: Mitsubishi Motors Desafio Inca Peru  
**4.00** Cycling: inCycle 2018  
**5.00** Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018

### HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

**AM**  
**6.30** Magazine: Omnisport TV  
**7.00** Wrestling: WWE Bottomline (PG)  
**8.00** Football: EFL Championships 2018 Matchday 28: Middlesbrough Vs Millwall  
**10.00** National Basketball League Round 14: Brisbane Bullets Vs Cairns Taipans  
**PM**  
**12.00** Magazine: Omnisport TV  
**12.30** Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 28: Swansea City Vs Sheffield United  
**2.30** National Basketball League Round 14: Perth Wildcats Vs Melbourne United (Live)  
**4.30** Wrestling: WWE Afterburn (PG)  
**5.30** Fiba World Basketball  
**6.00** Asean Basketball League: Saigon Heat Vs Westports Malaysia Dragons (Live)  
**8.00** Asean Basketball League: CLS Knights Indonesia Vs Singapore Slingers (Live)  
**10.00** Magazine: Omnisport TV  
**10.30** Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 28: Swansea City Vs Sheffield United  
**AM**  
**12.30** Wrestling: WWE Afterburn (PG)  
**1.30** Fiba World Basketball  
**2.00** Magazine: Omnisport TV  
**2.30** Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 28: Middlesbrough Vs Millwall  
**4.30** National Basketball League Round 14: Illawarra Hawks Vs New Zealand Breakers

### HUB SPORTS 3 (CHANNEL 204)

**AM**  
**11.00** Golf: Morning Drive 2018  
**PM**  
**1.00** Golf: Feherly 2018 (Paul Azinger & Boo Weekley)  
**2.00** NCAA 2018 Men's Golf Championships: Individual Championship Finals  
**6.00** Golf: Asian Tour: SMBC Singapore Open Day 4  
**10.30** Golf: Best Lessons Ever 2018  
**11.00** Golf: The Skill Code 2017  
**AM**  
**1.00** Golf: World Long Drive: Atlantic City Boardwalk Bash  
**3.00** Golf: Asian Tour: SMBC Singapore Open Day 1

## Singtel TV

### DISCOVERY (HD) (CHANNEL 202)

**AM**  
**6.35** Gold Rush 9  
**7.25** How To Build... Everything  
**7.50** The Mind Control Freaks  
**8.15** Strip The Cosmos 3  
**9.05** Wheeler Dealers 14  
**9.55** Speed Is The New Black 2  
**10.45** How Do They Do It? 15  
**11.35** Mad Dog Made  
**PM**  
**4.35** Unusual Suspects: Deadly Intent 9  
**5.25** Gold Rush 9  
**6.15** Manhunt With Joel Lambert  
**7.10** Marooned With Ed Stafford 2  
**8.05** How China Made It  
**9.00** Shark Week: Sharks And The City: New York  
**9.55** Car Vs Wild 2  
**10.50** Marooned With Ed Stafford 2  
**11.45** Unusual Suspects: Deadly Intent 9  
**AM**  
**12.35** How Do They Do It? 15  
**1.25** Impossible Engineering 4  
**2.15** Manhunt With Joel Lambert  
**3.05** Wheeler Dealers 14  
**3.55** Speed Is The New Black 2  
**4.45** World's Top 5 2  
**5.35** Stupid Man Smart Phone

### TLC (HD) (CHANNEL 254)

**AM**  
**7.25** 90 Day Fiance: Before The 90 Days 2  
**8.15** Say Yes To The Vegas Dress  
**9.05** Outdaughtered 3  
**9.55** Buddy's Big Bakedown  
**10.45** Martha & Snoop's Potluck Dinner Party 2  
**11.35** Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern 10  
**PM**  
**12.25** Dr Pimple Popper  
**1.15** Cruise The World  
**1.40** New Taste Of Hong Kong  
**2.05** The Little Couple 9  
**2.55** Star Plates  
**3.45** Single Dad Seeking...  
**5.25** Cruise The World  
**5.50** New Taste Of Hong Kong  
**6.15** Rachel Hunter's Tour Of Beauty  
**7.10** Outdaughtered 3  
**8.05** Dr Pimple Popper  
**9.00** Star Plates  
**9.55** Martha & Snoop's Potluck Dinner Party 2  
**10.50** Buddy's Big Bakedown  
**11.45** Fast Food Mania  
**AM**  
**12.35** Ultimate Cake Off 2  
**1.25** Project Runway 16  
**2.15** Great British Bake-Off 4  
**3.05** Unreal Estate  
**3.55** Say Yes To The Dress: The Big Day 3  
**4.45** Kitchen Boss  
**5.35** Married By Mom & Dad 2

### AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

**AM**  
**6.00** MacGyver 3  
**6.50** Team Ninja Warrior 2  
**8.35** Hawaii Five-0 9  
**9.30** Instinct

**10.20** Seal Team 2  
**11.10** Supernatural 14  
**PM**  
**12.05** Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2  
**12.55** Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders  
**2.35** The Amazing Race 30  
**4.25** Maximum Risk  
**6.25** The Blacklist 6  
**7.15** Hawaii Five-0 9  
**8.10** MacGyver 3  
**9.05** Seal Team 2  
**10.00** Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines  
**AM**  
**12.15** Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2  
**2.00** American Ninja Warrior 8  
**3.00** The Blacklist 5  
**4.00** Killjoys 3  
**5.00** MacGyver

### WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

**AM**  
**6.00** iZombie 4  
**9.45** Top 20 Funniest 2  
**11.15** Friends 9  
**11.40** Breaking The Magician's Code  
**PM**  
**1.20** Harry Potter And The Sorcerer's Stone  
**4.05** Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets  
**7.00** Pan  
**9.00** Pacific Rim  
**11.25** Lethal Weapon 3  
**AM**  
**12.15** Gotham 5  
**1.10** The Big Bang Theory 9  
**1.35** iZombie 4  
**2.25** Major Crimes  
**3.15** Supergirl 2  
**4.05** Top 20 Funniest  
**5.00** Major Crimes

### COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

**AM**  
**6.00** Takeshi's Castle 4  
**7.15** Just For Laughs Gags 13  
**8.10** Mr Bean  
**9.10** Most Ridiculous  
**9.35** Your Face Or Mine 4  
**10.25** Most Ridiculous 2  
**11.15** Saturday Night Live 44  
**PM**  
**12.00** Just For Laughs Gags 14  
**12.25** Lip Sync Battle 4  
**1.40** The Fuccons  
**1.45** Back To School Special  
**2.35** The Fuccons  
**2.45** Teachers  
**3.35** Teachers 2  
**4.25** Back To School Special  
**5.15** Just For Laughs Gags 14  
**5.40** Saturday Night Live 44  
**6.20** Most Ridiculous 2  
**7.10** Jeff Ross Presents Roast Battle 3  
**8.25** Idiots  
**9.15** The Jim Jefferies Show  
**10.05** Funny As Hell 4  
**11.10** Inside Amy Schumer  
**AM**  
**12.25** Jeff Ross Presents Roast Battle 3  
**1.40** South Park 22  
**3.45** Chappelle's Show

### JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)



# Rallying cry to save the earth

Popular culture to inspire the eco warrior in you



**Benson Ang**  
Lifestyle Correspondent

Need some inspiration to go green? Here are some movies, songs and a television show to get you pumped up about saving the environment.

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1  
**CAPTAIN PLANET AND THE PLANETEERS (1990 to 1992)**

The American animated television series features a theme song cheering “Go, planet!” and a superhero with grass-green hair who is weakened when he comes

into contact with pollution. Both entertaining and educational, the episodes typically highlight environmental issues such as deforestation and water contamination, with a segment at the end reminding viewers to be part of the solution rather than “the pollution”.



2  
**KEKEXILI: MOUNTAIN PATROL (2004)**

Set in the Tibetan region of Kekexili, this moving drama film will take your breath away with its cinematography, depicting rugged,

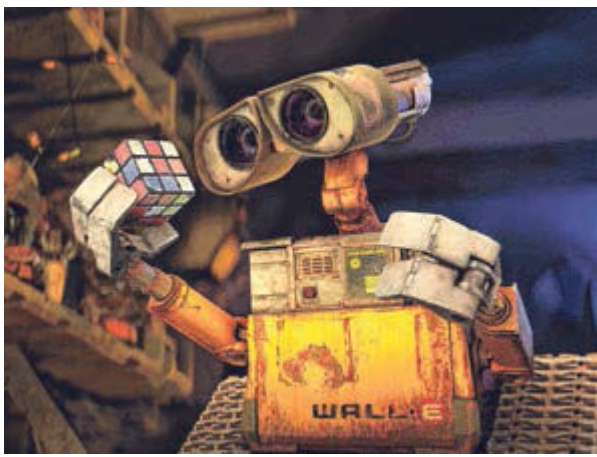
majestic landscapes, and move you with the conviction of its characters. It tells the story of a journalist who visits the region to uncover the truth surrounding the poaching of the endangered Tibetan antelope. The people’s love of their land is a reminder of the importance of living in harmony with nature.

PHOTOS: DISNEY, DISNEYCHANNEL.IT/YOUTUBE, MADMAN ENTERTAINMENT/YOUTUBE, REMHQ/YOUTUBE, MICHAEL JACKSON/YOUTUBE, TAIWAN AERIAL IMAGING, UIP, UNIVERSAL MUSIC, WUTFILM STUDIO/YOUTUBE, YOUTUBE MOVIES/YOUTUBE



3  
**AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH (2006)**

Former United States vice-president Al Gore’s (above) campaign to educate people about global warming is captured in this documentary film, which contains impactful visuals of melting snowcaps and disastrous hurricanes. His thesis that the phenomenon is real and caused by mankind is supported by detailed graphs and flow charts, which experts have praised for outlining the science behind global warming accurately.



4  
**WALL-E (2008)**

The animated movie (above) is not only an Oscar-winning example of non-verbal story-telling, but also a cautionary tale of the dangers of mass consumerism. Set in a future, garbage-covered Earth, it follows a solitary trash compactor robot, Wall-E, who is left to organise the mess. The robot’s adorable chemistry with the sleek egg-shaped probe Eve will charm you, while the film’s critique of mass consumption might offer food for thought.



5  
**BEYOND BEAUTY: TAIWAN FROM ABOVE (2013)**

A lush and magnificent aerial photography documentary film (above) that invites one to look at Taiwan from a bird’s-eye view. Highlighting not only the territory’s rugged mountains, meandering rivers and galloping wildlife, but also the effects of industrialisation and technological progress, the film raises questions about how man is slowly, but surely, changing the area’s natural equilibrium.



6  
**MOTHER NATURE'S SON (1968) BY THE BEATLES**

Bask in languid nostalgia with this carefree ditty from the English band (above). The lyrics “sit beside a mountain stream/see her waters rise/listen to the pretty sound of music as she flies” evoke the simple joys of being at one with nature.



7  
**FALL ON ME (1986) BY R.E.M.**

Whether you believe this song is about oppression in general, or acid rain in particular, it suggests a problem mankind created, which it might one day have to take responsibility for. One of the alternative rock band’s early compositions about environmentalism, there are references to man’s impact on the environment aplenty, such as lyrics mentioning melting statues in the park.



8  
**EARTH SONG (1995) BY MICHAEL JACKSON**

The mother of all eco anthems features the late King Of Pop (above) lamenting the environmental devastation, poverty and war around him, and crying: “What have we done to the world/look what we’ve done”. Its music video is even more over the top, with the singer falling to his knees in a burnt-down forest and, later, summoning a force that reverses the destruction. If this does not stir one to Heal The World – another Jackson song – what will?



9  
**MAKE A WAVE (2010) BY DEMI LOVATO AND JOE JONAS**

Lovato and Jonas (both above) join hands for a sweet song about the difference one person can make. The lyrics go, “Just a pebble in the water/can set the sea in motion”. Empowering and uplifting, the music video also features the stars – who once dated each other – looking adorable by the sea, as well as oh-so-cute penguins and dolphins.



10  
**WITHERED (2012) BY KATNCANDIX2**

This rock song by the on-hiatus Taiwanese indie duo (above) will have you grooving along to its eco-conscious beats. With lyrics such as “nobody wants to care/so nobody cares” and “everyone around/shuts their mouths”, it seemingly bemoans apathy and inaction. A YouTube clip of the song has Taiwanese singer Hsiao Chiu singing through a loud hailer, as if she were rallying for public support. Show her some love.



Top Five: Vegetarian restaurants

# Veggie delicious

Delectable dishes to try when you feel like going meatless



**Wong Ah Yoke**  
Food Critic

I do not think I can give up eating meat, but I love vegetarian dishes nonetheless. Whether it is a simple stir-fry or something created to resemble a meat dish, good cooking is something I can always appreciate.

So once in a while, I go for a vegetarian meal and leave the table feeling lighter than if I have feasted on meat.

If that helps the environment too by cutting down the greenhouse gas emissions caused by large-scale animal farming, all the better.

I make sure I have a desk calendar with lunar dates though, so that I can avoid visiting the restaurants on the first and 15th days of the lunar month. Many Buddhists go vegetarian on those two days and these eateries are often packed.

But on other days, if I feel like skipping meat, these are my top five choices.

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1

**LINGZHI VEGETARIAN**

05-01 Liat Towers, 541 Orchard Road, tel: 6734-3788; open: 11am to 3pm, 6 to 10pm daily

What I like about LingZhi is that it does not treat itself as a vegetarian restaurant. It feels like any regular Chinese restaurant, except that there is no meat in the dishes.

In fact, many of the dishes would not be out of place in an upmarket Chinese restaurant. Charcoal Beancurd With Golden Oyster Mushroom And Fresh Seasonal Vegetable (\$18), for example, is not only innovative, but also tastes delicious.

Another good dish is the Mushroom Truffle Bisque Served In Stone Pot (\$10 a person), a creamy soup packed with umami from champignon and perfumed by slices of black truffles. It comes in a heated stone pot to keep it warm to the last drop and an accompanying skinny spring roll relieves it of any risk of monotony.

Vegetarian Satay Served In Fresh Pineapple (\$24 for eight sticks, above) comprises pieces of grilled monkey head mushrooms skewered on sticks. These are stuck on the rim of a hollowed pineapple filled with peanut sauce. On the side is a salad of pineapple and cucumber chunks.

The same mushrooms are used in another dish, Firecracker Monkey Head Mushrooms (\$22), which is based on the popular Firecracker Chicken dish from Sichuan. But this is less successful because the mushrooms do not crisp up when fried, unlike the chicken pieces in the original dish.

There is a second outlet at Novena Square which is more accessible if you plan to take the MRT. But I usually go to the Liat Towers branch because I like its hidden-away location with direct access from the carpark on the fifth floor.

2

**MTR – MAVALLI TIFFIN ROOMS**

438 Serangoon Road, tel: 6296-5800; open: 8.30am to 3pm, 5.30 to 9.30pm (Tuesdays to Sundays), closed on Mondays

Anyone who thinks that Indian vegetarian food is all mushy, overcooked vegetables and heavy carbs will marvel at how the chefs here create such a wide range of textures and flavours out of flour and lentils.

MTR is a branch of a chain of restaurants that started in Bangalore, India, in 1924. It now has a number of outlets in the city as well as in Dubai and Kuala Lumpur.

In Singapore, the restaurant is divided into two parts – a casual section where you order and pay in advance at the cash counter, and a slightly more formal adjoining room where a server takes your order.

Prices are ridiculously reasonable, with idlis starting at \$2 and a set meal at \$8.

The Masala Dosa (\$6, right) is to die for. The pancake made from a rice flour batter and back lentils is grilled till it turns a rich brown and is folded into a triangle. It is crisp outside and slightly spongy inside – contrasting textures that give it a



wonderful mouthfeel. And the aroma of ghee is alluring. Folded into the pancake are soft pieces of spiced potato that go perfectly with it.

Poori (\$4 for two) is very good too. The puffed-up deep-fried unleavened bread is light and comes with a potato curry and chutney.

For dessert, get the Badam Halwa (\$4), a rich and satisfying ball made with evaporated milk, ghee and crushed almonds and flavoured with saffron.

4

**LOTUS VEGETARIAN RESTAURANT**

01-01/02 Chinatown Point, 133 New Bridge Road, tel: 6538-1068; open: 11.30am to 2.30pm, 5.30 to 9.30pm daily

This is a spin-off from Lotus Vegetarian Restaurant, an old eatery at Quality Hotel Marlow in Balestier Road that offers a daily buffet. The new outlet is more casual and targets a younger clientele with its cheerful, contemporary decor and clean plating.

Some popular dishes from the

main restaurant are available here too, such as Double-Boiled Herbal Tian Ma Soup (\$8.80), but there are also many that are created for the Chinatown restaurant, including single-person servings of noodle dishes.

The Stir Fried Laksa (\$9.80) is very good, with the noodles tossed in an aromatic and spicy gravy with beancurd puffs (taupok) and straw mushrooms.

Spicy Grilled Oat Slices In Hotplate (\$18.80, above) looks like a big piece of fish fillet topped with a spice mix and grilled in aluminium foil. It's delicious, especially with a few drops of lime juice to brighten up the flavours.



PHOTOS: ELEMEN, LOTUS KITCHEN, TUNGLOK GROUP, WONG AH YOE



3

**MIAO YI VEGETARIAN RESTAURANT**

03-32 People's Park Centre, 101 Upper Cross Street, tel: 6467-1331; open: 11am to 3pm, 6 to 10pm daily

This family-style restaurant moved here from Coronation Plaza more than two years ago. But walking into the fluorescent-lit, open dining room, you would think it's been there for years because there is a retro feel about the place that reminds me of suburban Chinese restaurants from the 1990s.

The menu offers a lot of mock dishes, where vegetarian ingredients are made to look like meat or

fish and used in regular recipes. Such dishes can sometimes turn out rather rough or greasy in other places, but Miao Yi does them really well.

My favourite dish is BBQ Fish (\$16, above), comprising pieces of layered beancurd skin grilled and laid out on a banana leaf like pieces of fish fillet. These are smothered with a thick sour and spicy sauce that reminds me of Peranakan asam dishes.

The Mock Curry Mutton (from \$10) may have none of the characteristic mutton flavour, but the curry is suitably spicy and aromatic. And the pieces of gluten masquerading as meat soak up the gravy marvellously. Eat it with steaming white rice.

5

**ELEMEN**

01-75A/76 Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Boulevard, tel: 6238-0511; open: 11.30am to 4pm, 5.30 to 10pm daily

Elemen is a contemporary cafe-like eatery serving Asian and Western dishes. The idea seems not so much to replace meat in regular dishes with vegetarian options, but to serve dishes that are not designed to include meat in the first place.

So you get a choice of salads such as Rojak (\$5.80) and Mushroom Salad (\$5.80) that would not be out of place on the menu of any restaurant. Similarly, meat doesn't have to be

part of the equation in broths such as Wild Mushroom Cream Soup With Truffle Oil (\$6.80, above) or the 5 Elemen Soup (\$9.80), which gets its flavours from dried fungi.

If you like mushrooms, you would be happy with the pasta items, which come with porcini or shiitake. But the Wild Mushroom And White Truffle Pizza (\$16.80) is bland and boring, so I won't order that again.

Another quibble I have with the restaurant is that serving sizes are small. With most of the dishes being very light as well, I'm still hungry after a four-course meal.

Fortunately, prices are not high, and the restaurant offers an eight-course set for lunch and weekday dinner at \$32.80. Go for it.

Cheap & Good

# Homely meatless dishes



**Eunice Quek**  
Food Correspondent

If you are looking to add more greens to your diet, Fortune Centre in Middle Road is a haven for affordable vegetarian and vegan fare.

With more than 10 eateries to pick from, you will be spoilt for choice. So take the time to eat your way through the outlets,

most of which are homely and have a no-frills menu.

Sandwiched between a beauty salon and art studio is Vege Pot, which opened about 2½ years ago.

The menu features a range of rice and noodle dishes – from tomato petai rice to Penang assam laksa – and I like that plenty of the ingredients are made in-house.

I order the bibimbap (\$5.90) as it calls out to me from the menu and get a generous portion of brown rice topped with thinly sliced carrots, bean sprouts, chopped long beans, sliced cucumber and kimchi. The fragrant “meat” in the dish is made from mushrooms and has a nice chewy texture.

I mix the ingredients and end up with a lovely combination of textures and flavours with the tangy kimchi, cold and crunchy cucumber and crisp carrots.

I do not miss real meat at all, nor the gochujang sauce or egg that normally comes with the Korean bibimbap.

The dish comes with a fragrant, almost creamy, miso soup – a perfect complement to the satisfying main.

Another highlight is the dry ramen (\$5.50) with handmade dumplings, tossed in a slightly herbal dark sauce. The dumplings have a thin skin and are filled with diced carrots and fungus. I get three plump dumplings in a light and clear soup which has corn, fried beancurd, white shimeiji mushrooms, fungus and spinach.

As I chomp on the delicious dumplings, I make a mental note to



The bibimbap comes with brown rice topped with mushrooms, thinly sliced carrots, bean sprouts, chopped long beans and sliced cucumber.  
ST PHOTO: EUNICE QUEK

get an extra portion when I dine there again.

I also try the red yeast mee sua (\$5.50), which comes with tau pok (fried beancurd puff), carrots, corn, as well as white shimeiji and enoki mushrooms. The soup is on the sweet side because of the vegetables, so I let

the mee sua soak up its flavour.

Other dishes I intend to try on my next visit include the five spices braised beancurd king oyster mushroom rice (\$5), miso udon (\$5) and kimchi noodle (\$5).

For the Chinese New Year period, don't miss the small selection of house-made snacks, which includes almond

cookies and cornflake crisps.

Vege Pot charges an extra 50 cents for takeaway containers, so bring your own if you can.

Plus, you'll be helping the environment by cutting down on single-use plastics.

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**VEGE POT**

02-31 Fortune Centre, 190 Middle Road; open: 11am to 8pm (Thursdays to Tuesdays), closed on Wednesdays; go to [www.facebook.com/VegePot](http://www.facebook.com/VegePot) or order online at [vegepot.oddle.me](http://vegepot.oddle.me) (prices may vary)

Rating: ★★☆☆



# Bruised, blemished, deformed, but just as good

Restaurants are creating tasty dishes with “imperfect” ingredients, while supermarts are selling “ugly” produce at more attractive prices



Eunice Quek  
Food Correspondent

Imperfect ingredients – blemished, bruised or even deformed – are slowly shedding their “ugly food” image.

In a bid to get more consumers to buy these products – mainly fruit and vegetables – supermarket chains such as FairPrice and Sheng Siong have been selling them at more attractive prices. For example, FairPrice supermarkets sell a mixed bag of blemished fruit for \$2, so you could save from a few cents to a few dollars.

Chefs have also been creative in incorporating “ugly” ingredients into their dishes, as well as maximising the use of odd parts of produce such as vegetable skins or fruit peel. After all, it is all about minimising food waste which, in turn, helps consumers and businesses cut costs.

Two months after its first collabora-



tion with charity organisation The Food Bank Singapore in November, Plentyfull restaurant at Millenia Walk is continuing the partnership with the launch of a new menu.

Called One-Dish@A-Time, it aims to encourage consumers to have a meal made from “ugly” and donated food from The Food Bank Singapore, to raise funds for feeding the needy as well as heighten awareness of the food insecurity situation in Singapore.

Plentyfull's chef Victor Loy has rolled out offerings of Mediterranean egg and bean stew with grilled sourdough bread (\$18), kaya croissant (\$3.50) and hazelnut fondant with yuzu sorbet (\$14, from 6pm onwards). The menu starts tomorrow, while stocks last. The previous edition included tuna pasta, rice pudding and granola bars.

Over at microbrewery-restaurant LeVel33 at Marina Bay Financial

Centre, some dishes use spent grain – a by-product of barley malt in the beer brewing process. Instead of wasting it, executive chef ArChan Chan uses it to add texture and flavour to the new menu's kingfish sashimi (\$26). She blends the grain with puffed rice and nori (seaweed) to create a “sand” that goes with the dish.

Spent grain is also mixed with spices and vinegar to bake baby carrots for its dish of grilled quail with chive flowers and Stout glaze (\$27), and for making flat bread and as garnish for canapes.

Indeed, chefs are getting creative with the use of odd ends of vegetables, fruit or meats, and they encourage diners to do the same at home.

Head chef Emanuele Faggi of Zafferano Italian Restaurant & Lounge at Ocean Financial Centre dries the rind of parmesan cheese and tops it with uni cream and nori flakes to serve as a starter in the restaurant. Rice used for storing truffles is also reused to make rice crackers.

He also takes the skin of toma-

toes, onions and potatoes to create powders used for seasoning dishes. Other ways of waste management at the integrated resort include using industrial-grade blast chillers to store food items – these are first blast-frozen to minus 18 deg C – before The Food Bank Singapore collects the food the following day. Unconsumed bread from buffet lines is donated to Food from the Heart, a non-profit charity.

This year, MBS has already started additional food waste management pilot projects, says Mr Kevin Teng, its executive director of sustainability. It is replacing its standard plates with compartmentalised ones to help staff better portion food, as well as introducing a smart food waste tracking system at restaurant Rise to measure and categorise the types of food waste that are being disposed of.

For The Prive Group's executive chef Robin Ho, minimising food waste involves using as much of the ingredient as possible. Skins are left on cucumbers and potatoes, for example, and broccoli stems are

sauteed along with its florets.

He says: “Skins and stems often provide additional colour, nutrients and phytochemicals for our bodies. I love using coriander roots in stock, and folding them into fish cakes. Cauliflower and broccoli

florets make great vegetable couscous or “rice” as well. At grocery and dining destination Habitat by Honestbee in Pasir Panjang, “ugly” ingredients not bought by consumers are used at its food and beverage outlets.

Its managing director Pauline Png says it is in talks with suppliers to pack groceries into different and smaller quantities to cater to small families who consume less and want to minimise waste. There are plans to re-purpose “ugly” fruit for

fruit essences that can be used in drinks and to compost food waste.

“We encourage consumers to buy the whole animal, if possible. Buying a whole salmon, for example, is cheaper and the fish can be portioned out properly to be frozen for

future consumption. Everything, from the salmon head to its bones, can be used.”

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Above: The “ugly food” section at FairPrice Xtra, Jem.

Main picture: Some items from Plentyfull restaurant – Kaya Croissant (top left, \$3.50), Mediterranean Egg and Bean Stew with grilled sourdough bread (bottom right, \$18) and Hazelnut Fondant with yuzu sorbet (bottom left, \$14).

Left: Plentyfull chef Victor Loy has rolled out One-Dish@A-Time to encourage consumers to have a meal made from “ugly” and donated food from The Food Bank, to raise funds for feeding the needy. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG, ALPHONSUS CHERN



Left: A by-product of barley malt in the beer brewing process helps add texture and flavour to Kingfish Sashimi from LeVel33. Above: At Zafferano, rice used for storing truffles is re-used to make rice crackers. PHOTOS: LEVEL33, ZAFFERANO



Left: Ingredients for the dish include leftover rice, coriander roots, garlic skins and chicken skin. Above: Clean and rinse the coriander roots. Right: The roots add flavour to the stock. ST PHOTOS: HEDY KHOO



## Using odds and ends for porridge



Hedy Khoo  
STFood Online Editor

Every home cook would have faced the problem of leftover ingredients after cooking.

The leftovers may either end up getting tossed out or left forgotten and sometimes rotten – in the fridge.

For The Sunday Times' eco special, I was challenged to whip up a dish using leftovers.

It got me to rethink food waste and made my mother happy at the same time.

You see, my compulsive buying of ingredients has often sparked more rage than joy in my mother, who has the unenviable job of clearing out expired food and condiments left over from my culinary



experiments. While home composting is an obvious solution for those who have plants, it can be fussy and messy, and half measures will attract pests.

A more practical approach for home cooks is to shop responsibly and minimise waste. A little planning can prevent buying more than what you need or already have.

The first step is to check what is in your kitchen and, where possible, use what you have.

Some ingredients like pepper-

corns can be kept for extended periods. Dry-roasting old pepper-corns in a pan awakens their flavours. The same applies to other spices such as cinnamon and cloves.

If you have cooked food leftovers, see if they can be used for a stew or stock. Every festive season, I look forward to making a spicy tangy chye buay (chye buay refers to leftovers in Hokkien) with Chinese mustard greens using leftover roasted meats and bones.

Also, challenge yourself to season your dishes with ingredients that you already have in your kitchen, such as light soya sauce.

I find that it helps to shop at the wet market when it comes to ingre-

dients such as shallots, onions, garlic, ginger and chillies.

Vegetable stalls and provision shops allow you to buy these in the quantities you want, unlike supermarkets which usually sell these items in fixed amounts.

How often have you binned scraps such as coriander roots and garlic skins?

Well, I saved these odds and ends and threw them into the stock pot together with chicken bones for Khao Tom, a Thai rice porridge dish.

The coriander roots and garlic skins, usually seen as waste, added incredible flavour to the stock.

In Thai cooking, coriander roots are an important ingredient. My friend's wife, who is Thai, values them to the point of freezing them for future use.

She has a tip for cleaning the coriander roots – soak them in a baking soda solution and rub with your fingers to help remove the dirt. Scraping with a paring knife gets them extra clean.

And here's a tip for those who like to make their own chicken stock: Packed deboned meat from the supermarket will obviously not come with the bones. But wet market stallholders will bag the bones if you ask.

Use them for boiling chicken stock – this helps minimise waste and saves you money on store-bought stock.

Try it yourself. And before you toss out those food scraps, take a moment to think about what tasty fare you can whip up with just a little effort and imagination.

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This Thai rice porridge is easy to whip up with leftover ingredients.

SCAN TO WATCH  
Click to see how to cook Khao Tom.  
http://str.sg/ouKU



### Khao Tom (Thai rice porridge)

**Ingredients**

- 5 coriander roots
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 5 litres of water
- 500g chicken bones
- 30g garlic, peel (keep the garlic skins)
- 1 flat tsp white peppercorns
- 20g fresh coriander, chopped (keep 3g to use as garnish)
- 250g minced pork collar
- 2 Tbs light soya sauce
- 1 Tbs fish sauce
- ½ tsp cornflour

2 fresh brown button mushrooms, sliced thinly

15g preserved radish

380g cooked rice

1 tsp fried garlic

### Method

- In a bowl, mix a teaspoon of baking soda and 1 litre of water. Soak the coriander roots for five minutes.
- Discard the mixture. Clean and rinse the coriander roots. Set aside.
- Bring 1 litre of water to a boil. Add the chicken bones and boil for three minutes until there is no more visible blood. Turn off the heat. Drain the water and rinse the chicken bones.
- Bring the remaining 3 litres of water to a boil in a clean pot. Add three coriander roots, chicken bones and garlic skins. Cover and boil over medium heat for 1 hour and 15 minutes.
- Turn the heat off, strain and reserve the chicken stock.
- Chop up the remaining two coriander roots.
- Using a mortar and pestle, crush the white peppercorns, garlic, chopped coriander roots and fresh coriander. Pound into a paste and set aside.

Add light soya sauce, 1 tablespoon of fish sauce and cornflour. Mix well.

Place in the fridge to marinate for half an hour.

Shape the minced pork into balls of 25g each.

Bring the chicken stock to a boil.

Add the pork balls and boil for one minute.

Add the brown button mushrooms and boil for one minute.

Add the cooked rice into the soup. Bring to a boil.

Add the preserved radish. Season with the remaining 1 tablespoon of fish sauce. Continue cooking until the pork balls float to the top.

Garnish with fried garlic and coriander leaves before serving.

Serves four to five.

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